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- Heat Pump Performance
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- Upgrading Old Radiators

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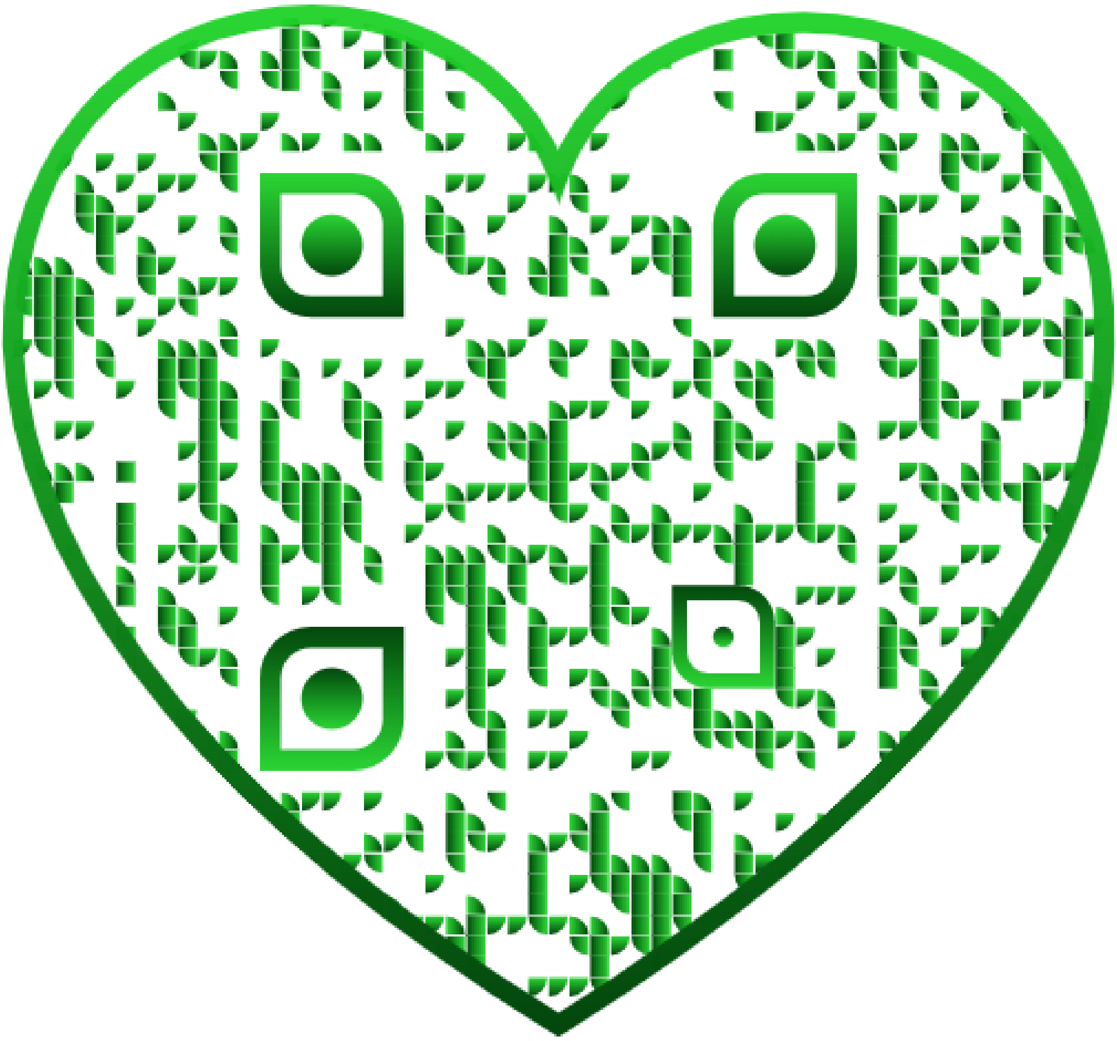
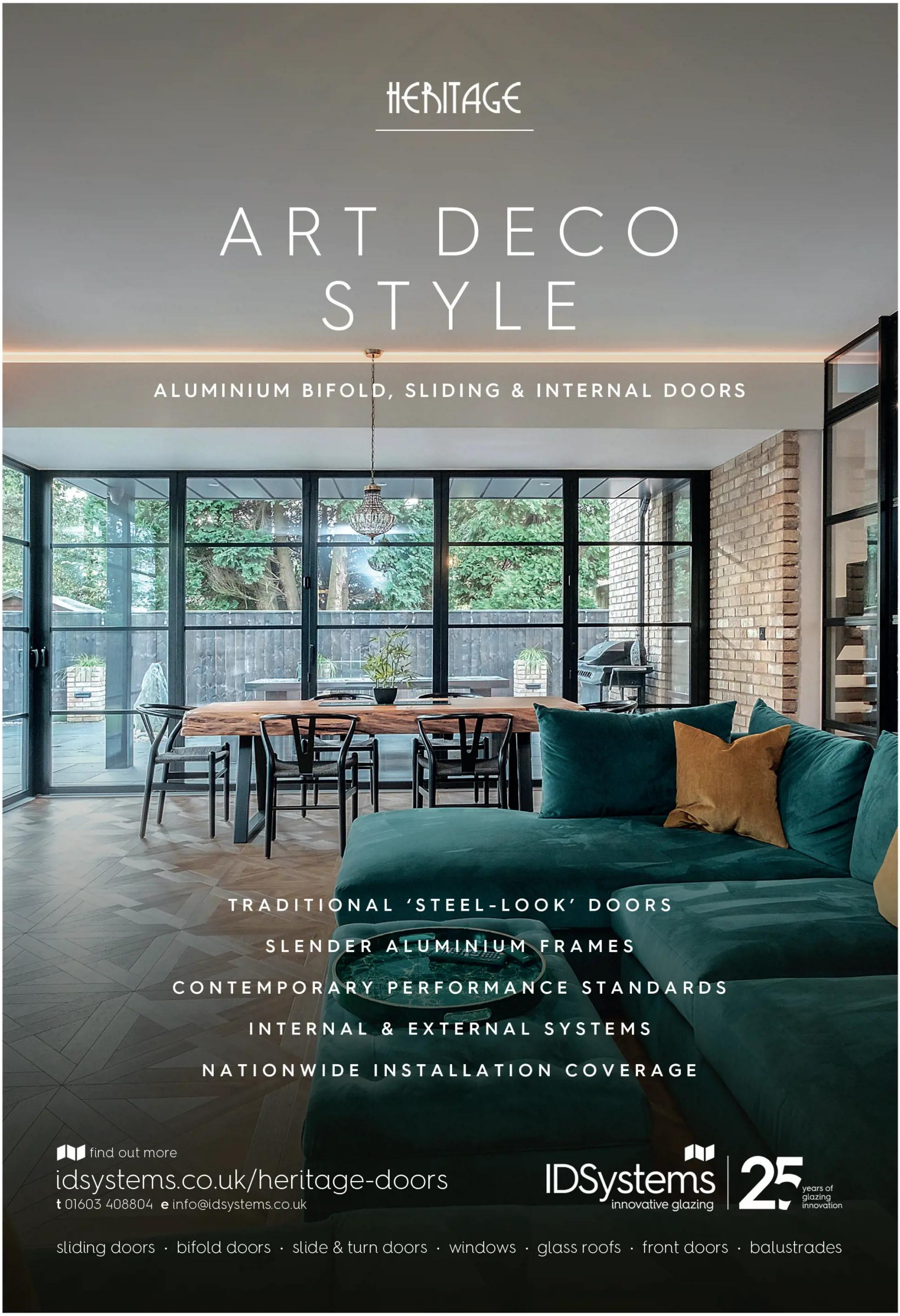
Multi-Generational Self Build Home | Eco Renovation of a 1970s House | Secrets of an Award-Winning New Build





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Welcome

Ask someone to envisage their ultimate dream home and the first thing they'll probably focus on is its setting. For many of us, a lush plot and beautiful views are right up there – in other words, a house in the countryside. Depending on life circumstances, it might not be your next home, or even the one after that. But there's something undeniable about the pull of living amongst nature.

If that urge speaks to you, then you won't want to miss our selection of inspiring homes (page 17) – all showcasing how modern design can work spectacularly in the countryside. And I'm delighted to say that, this issue, we're able to share the full story of one of the greatest examples of rural home design in recent memory; a self build that ticks all the boxes in terms of architecture, build quality, liveability and future-proofing. Head to page 43 to take a tour of Esther Horwood's award-winning project. Plus, learn the best ways to integrate picture windows and capture those jaw-dropping views on page 62! We also have guides on kitchen-diner extensions (page 52), eco heating (page 57), smart lighting (page 71), planning for renovation projects (page 80) and more!

Chris

CHRIS BATESMITH, CONTENT DIRECTOR

EDITOR'S FAVOURITE FEATURES

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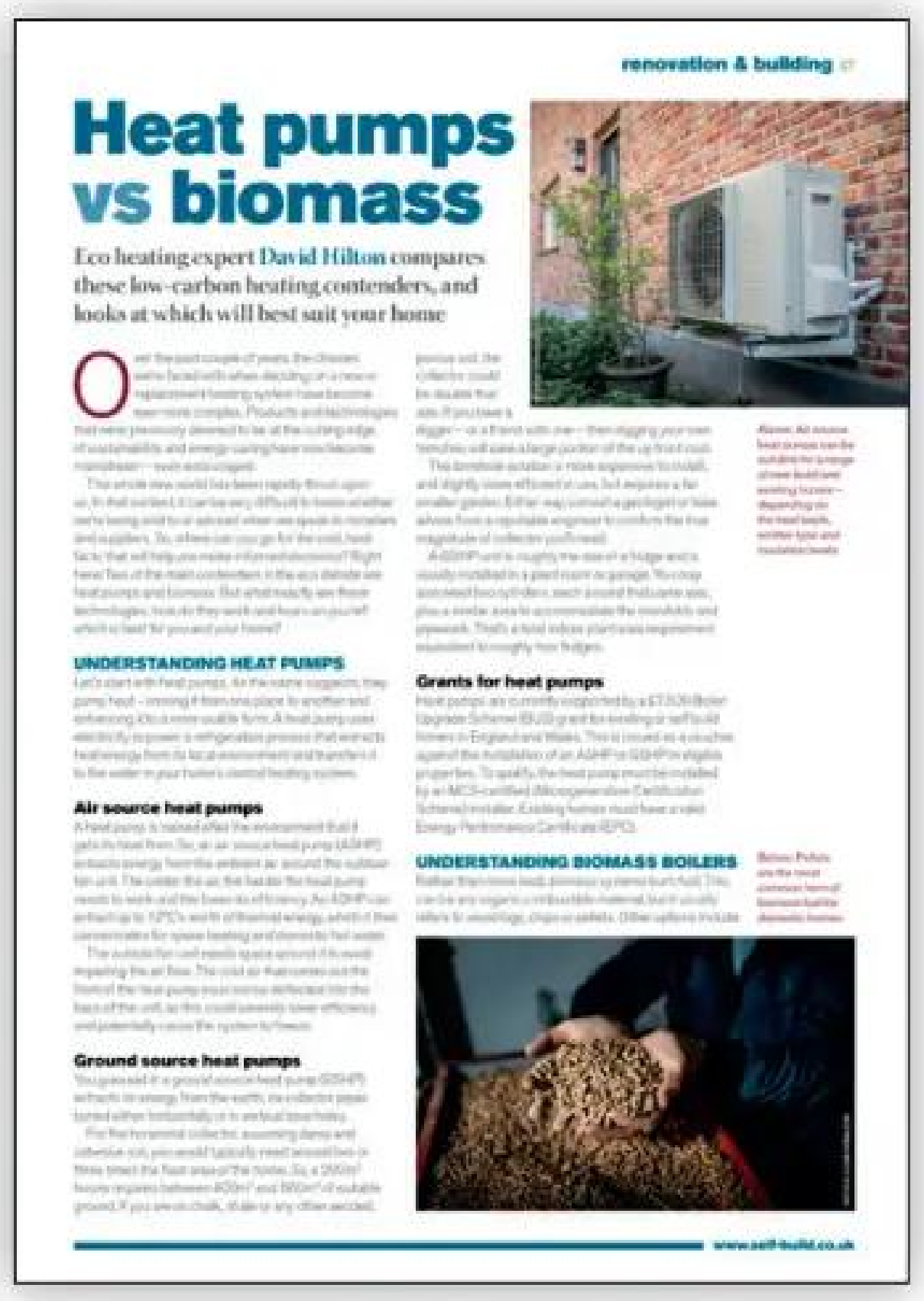

COVER IMAGE: A FLINT AND TILE-HUNG NEW BUILD COUNTRYSIDE HOME BY SELENCKY PARSONS (PAGE 17). PHOTO: FRENCH+TYE

MEET THE TEAM

SANDER TEL is Build It's digital features editor. Alongside putting together lots of inspiring content at self-build.co.uk, he regularly contributes in-depth articles for the magazine.

SCARLETT DEAMER is Build It's editorial assistant. This month she highlights some fantastic modern country homes (page 17) and shares her tips on eco build systems (page 66).

AMANDINE LEFEVRE is Build It's editorial assistant. From page 9, she's sourcing the latest news, products and materials. On page 62, she chats with the experts about perfecting picture windows.

JULIAN OWEN is Build It's design doctor and a self build architect with his own practice. He is a regular expert at Build It Live. On page 76, he reveals how to use rooflights effectively.

DAVE HILTON is a renewables and ventilation installer, and our eco heating expert at the Build It Live shows. On page 57, he sets out how to choose between heat pumps and biomass boilers.

KATE SANDHU is a renovation expert with a deep knowledge of project management. This month she looks at the options and costs involved for upgrading radiators (page 74).

NIGEL GRIFFITHS is Build It's sustainability expert, specialising in eco homes and renewable energy. This month, he investigates heat pump efficiency ratings and what they mean for you (page 88).

JULIA RIDDLE is a planning consultant with a wealth of experience in self and custom building. On page 80, she reveals what types of renovation work you can and can't do without planning.

EDITORIAL
Content director Chris Batesmith
Digital features editor Sander Tel
Editorial assistant Scarlett Deamer
Editorial assistant Amandine Lefevre
Contributing editor Emily Batesmith
Designer Justin Marshall
Content & marketing assistant Lucy Keech
Contributors Dave Hilton, Kate Sandhu, Julia Riddle, Julian Owen, Nigel Griffiths

020 3627 3240
www.self-build.co.uk

ADVERTISING SALES
Sales director
Nick Gillam 020 3627 3245
Account manager
Jamie Welsh 020 3553 2376
Sales & advertising administrator
Joanna Mitton 020 3627 3248

SUBSCRIPTIONS
01283 742970
subscriptions@castlemedia.co.uk
shop.self-build.co.uk

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EXHIBITIONS
Business development director
Sarah Nesbitt-Hawes 020 3627 3247
Account manager
Maria Varela 020 3627 3254

PUBLISHING
Managing director Calum Taylor
Finance director Katherine Taylor
Marketing director Claire Drakeford
Accounts Ellis Hambrecht 020 3627 3253
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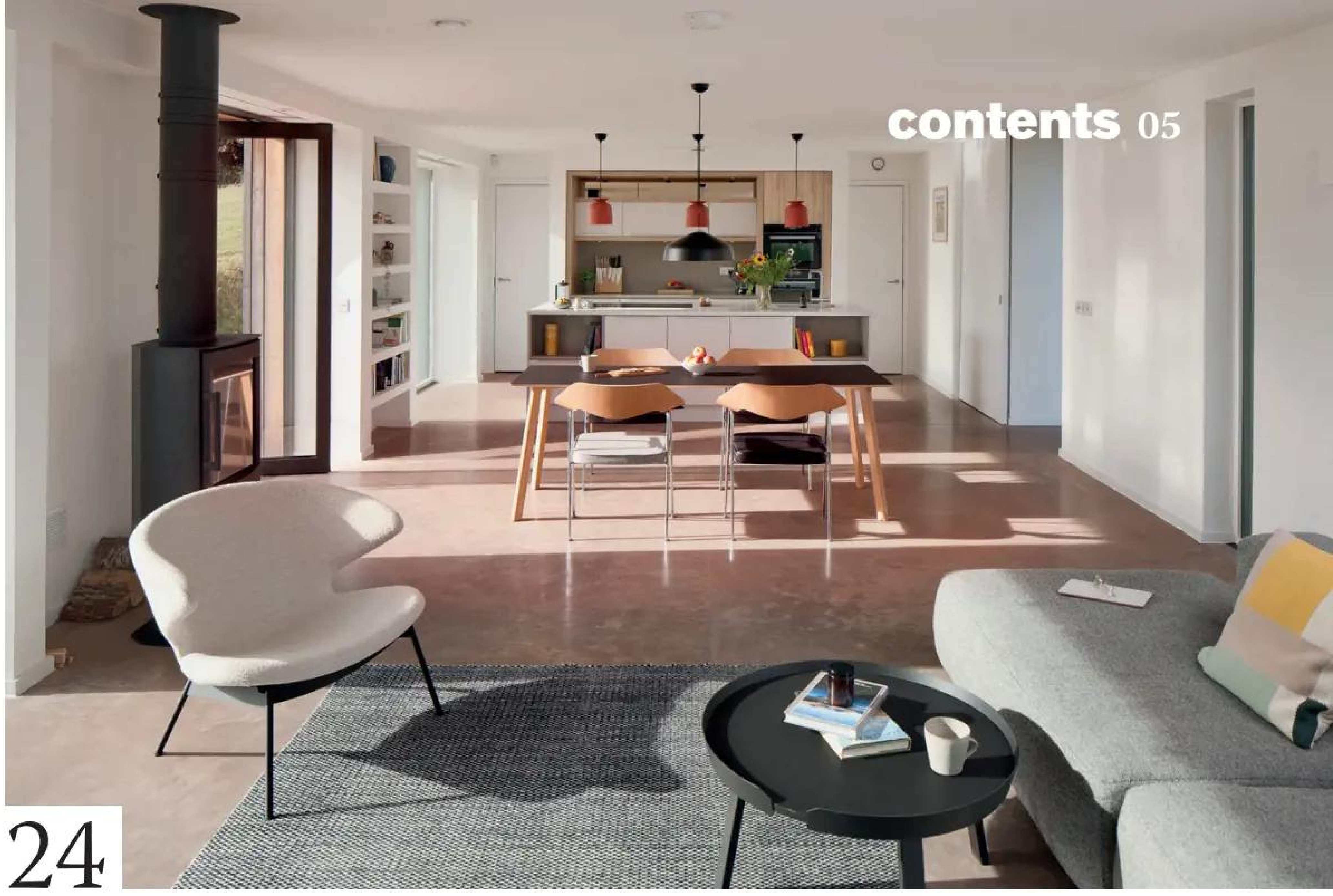
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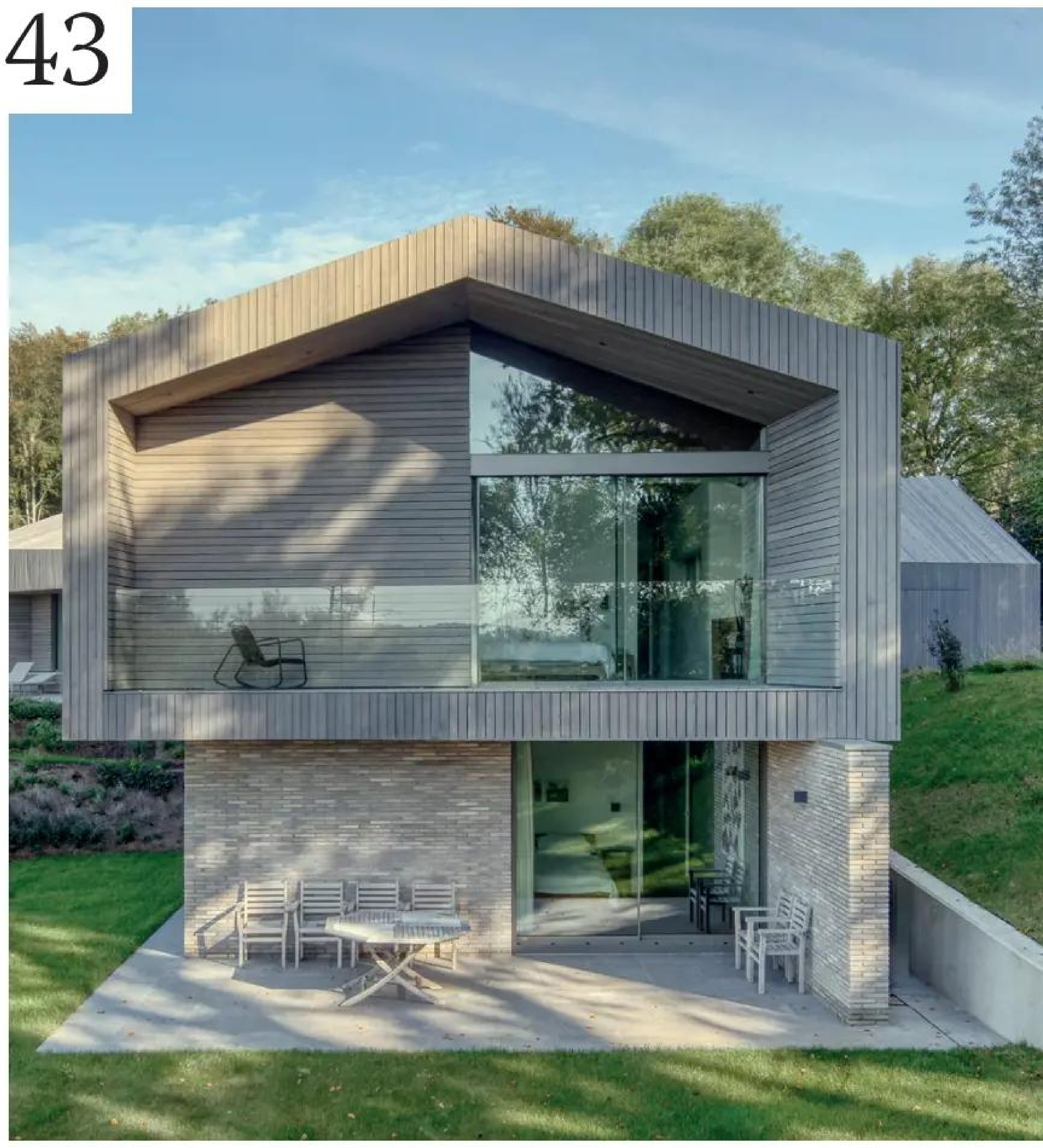
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Inspired by nature 43
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Architect's view 114
Lesley Hally discusses how to design a stunning and functional annexe that complements its setting and makes the most of a compact footprint

scandiahus
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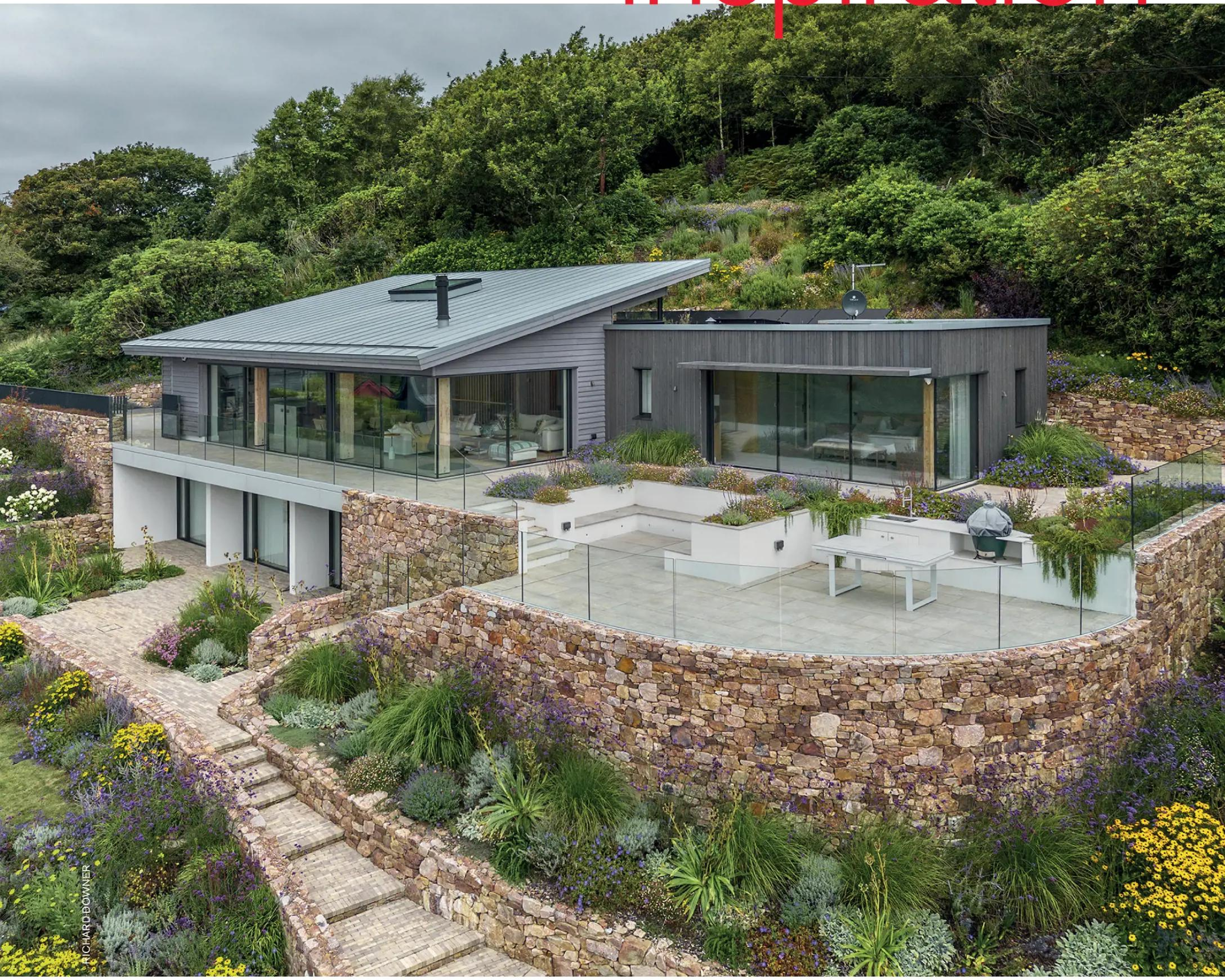
inspiration



RICHARD DOWNER

Sustainable & sensitive new home

Set on a coastal hillside within the protected landscape of the Gower Peninsula, this stunning contemporary replacement house by Roderick James Architects is strategically embedded into the terrain – with much of the structure located below ground level. Minimising visual impact while optimising thermal performance were key tenets of this stylish self build project.

Features such as drystone retaining walls, low-slung roof pitches and fully-glazed external balustrades reduce massing while bedding the new house into its setting. The planting scheme, designed to mature over time, further softens the building's form and enhances biodiversity.

The main accommodation is on the upper level, with an open kitchen-dining-living area in the main volume enjoying fantastic views through the floor-to-ceiling glazing. Avoiding internal partitions in this zone helps with daylight penetration as well as cross-flow ventilation. The master bedroom suite, in the adjoining flat-roofed structure, faces the same glorious vistas. The rest of the sleeping quarters are on the lower ground floor.

Built with insulating concrete formwork (ICF) and glulam timber, The Cabin is a net-zero building, producing as much energy annually as it consumes. This has been achieved through a combination of passive design strategies – orientation, glazing placement, roof overhangs and excellent thermal mass – along with high-performance renewable energy systems, including dual-roof solar PV and a borehole ground source heat pump.

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PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Hertfordshire House

by The DHaus Company

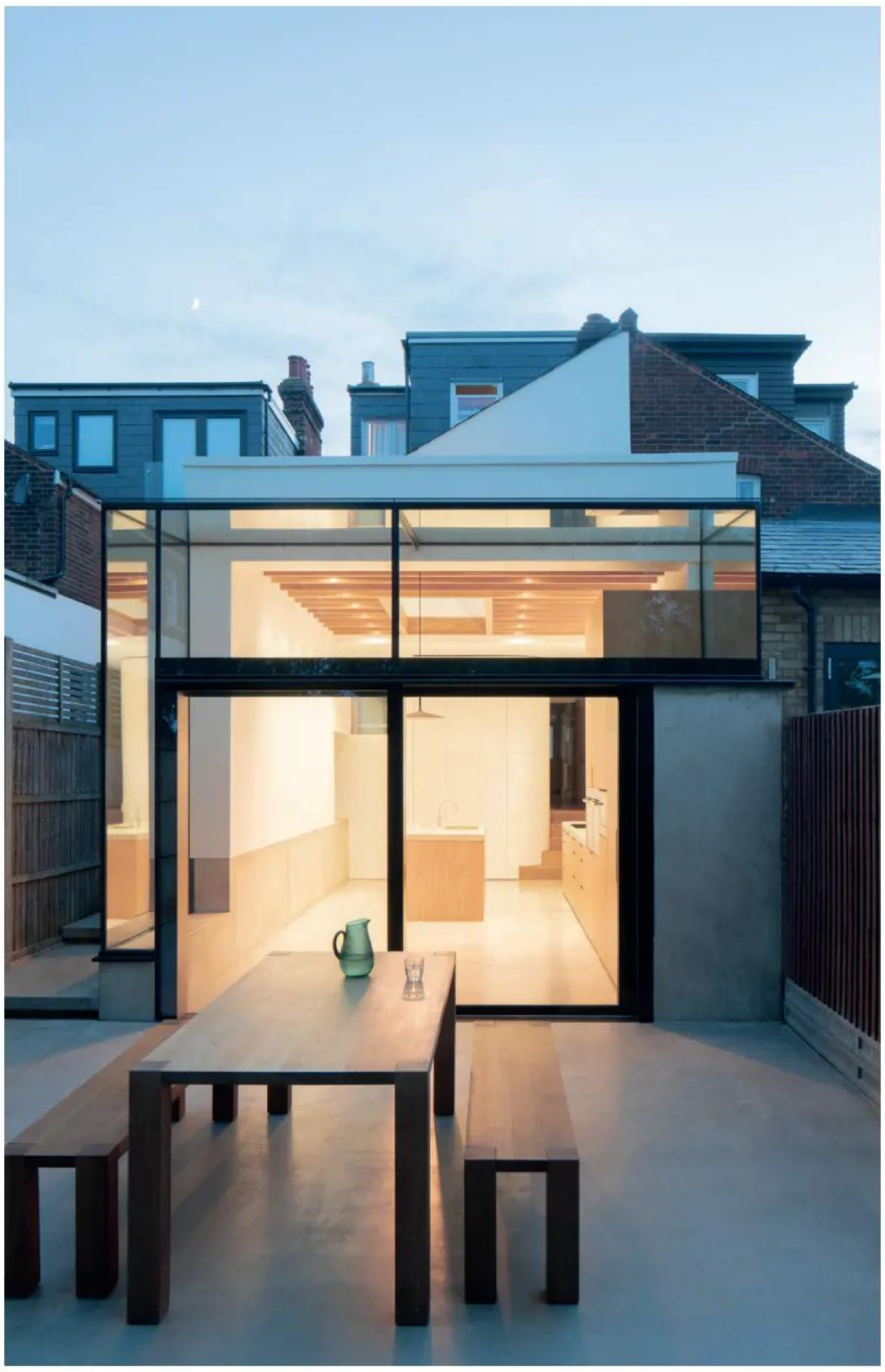
Thoughtfully designed by The DHaus Company, Hertfordshire House began with the clear aim of transforming the ground floor into a spacious, welcoming living room for the entire household to enjoy. What was once a dark and cramped area, with awkward access down to the garden, is now a warm and light-filled family hub with a generous kitchen and large windows to prioritise the influx of daylight and connection to the garden.

Within the glass extension, a striking timber-clad staircase leads from the main living area into the contemporary kitchen, where oversized ceiling heights strategically maximise the potential of the space. The design is otherwise rooted in a relatively restrained palette of three primary materials, ensuring sleek sightlines and a minimalist approach is maintained throughout the whole build.

Concrete defines the floors, worktops and low-level dwarf walls for the extension. Douglas fir timber brings character and warmth through the joinery, kitchen doors and exposed beams. Meanwhile, frameless glazing, arranged in an asymmetrical formation, frames the view of the garden patio. These thoughtful design decisions increase the connection between the new addition and the private outdoor space, mirroring the natural materials in the home.

A key visual is the interlocking window arrangement overlooking the courtyard, inspired by the sculptural forms of Spanish abstract artist Eduardo Chillida, whose work deeply informed the approach to depth and proportion in the design of Hertfordshire House.

For more information call 07828 825580
or visit thedhaus.com



Estate development ousts self build plan

A site in Petersfield, Hampshire, which was allocated for custom and self build housing in the town's Neighbourhood Plan back in 2016, has been ditched after the developer won approval to instead build an 85-home estate, citing a lack of interest for bespoke homes in the area. The local councillors queried the deviation from the original scheme and questioned how much effort was made to contact potential self builders, but the new proposal was backed by the South Downs National Park Authority.

1.4m

is the number of new homes that could be built on brownfield areas in England. This would reduce the need to encroach on green belt land whilst helping to meet UK housing targets. Data from CPRE shows that there are over 81,223 acres of brownfield land that local councils throughout England have identified as suitable for new dwellings. With 54% of these plots having obtained planning permission already, they have the ability to provide 770,000 shovel-ready sites.

Ikea relaunches UK renewables offering

Ikea is once again offering home solar solutions to customers after previously pulling them in 2019, following the end the government's Feed-in Tariff (FIT) scheme. Customers will be able to buy solar panels, battery energy storage, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and heat pumps. With such big players entering the market, self builders and renovators should benefit from competitive pricing as they consider turning to self-generation to combat rising bills and reduce their carbon footprints.

What's on?

REPAIR OF OLD BUILDINGS

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buildit.co.uk/training

NICK DEARDAN

Government aims to speed up home buying process

Labour has announced “the biggest shakeup to the home buying system in this country’s history,” in a consultation aimed at reforming the purchasing and selling process within the housing sector. The proposed changes set out to streamline transactions and cut the average time it takes to buy a property by four weeks. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) believes these proposals will save first-time buyers an average of £710 by reducing the time taken in the process. It also seeks to introduce binding contracts in an aim to halve the number of transactions failing and cut the risk of wasted time, money and stress. Mandatory qualifications and a Code of Practice for estate agents might also be put in place to improve standards and build up trust in the industry.

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need to know

Why custom build could be the future of housing

The UK housing market is facing a persistent challenge of too few homes being built. Meanwhile, too many of those that are delivered are failing to meet the needs of local communities and buyers. A mind-blowing 32% of people buying property on new build developments consider them to be poor quality, according to research by the Chartered Institute of Building.

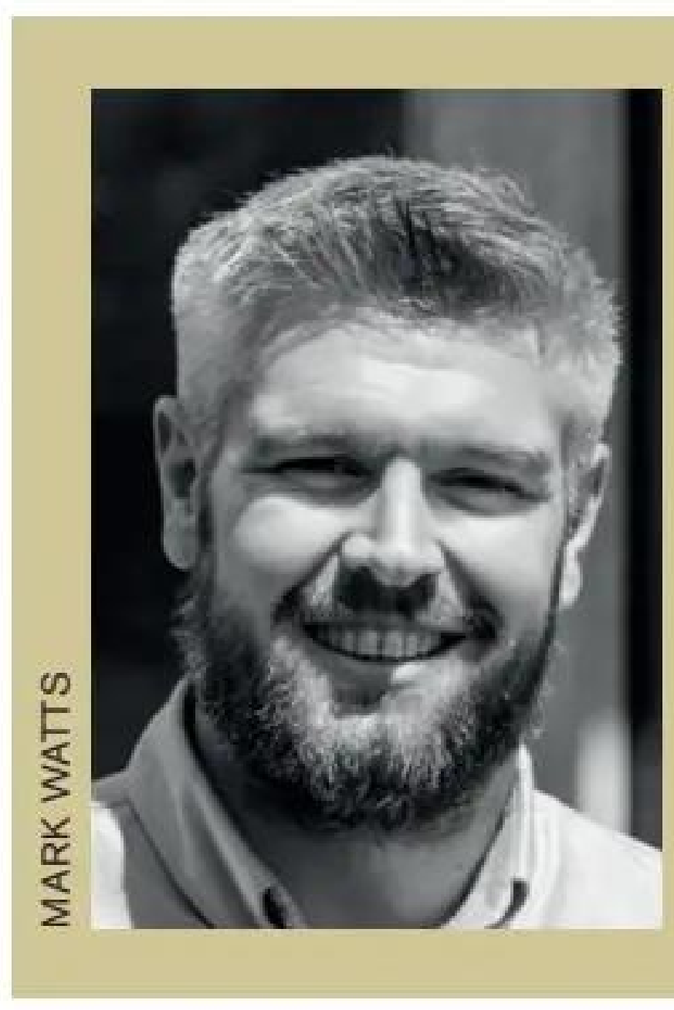
Although large-scale developments continue to dominate headlines, the quiet contender of small-scale custom build housing could help address this problem. This approach – where self builders can purchase plots enabled by specialists – allows buyers to influence the design and layout of their own home, actively changing how and where they live.

One of the primary and perhaps more obvious benefits of small-scale custom build is the quality of the homes produced. Unlike mass developments, which often prioritise speed and cost, self-commissioned housing emphasises the importance of durability, energy efficiency and lifestyle choice. Residents are involved from the early design stage through to the final product, meaning more thoughtful decisions can be made around location, floorplan and materials.

Custom build also offers something rarely seen in today’s housing market, which is options. If plot/home buyers have significant input throughout process, they are able to plan for multigenerational living and future flexibility. And with greater choice also comes greater satisfaction, reducing the sense of compromise many buyers feel when purchasing from a limited selection of standardised new builds.

A slightly less evident but nonetheless important factor is the way custom build can benefit and even uphold the local economy. Smaller projects typically involve local tradespeople and architects, rather than relying on national contractors and suppliers. So, over time, a network of skilled workers is formed and small businesses are given the chance to grow, creating new employment opportunities in the area. With self builds also being inherently more responsive and sensitive to their surroundings, developments can often be integrated into existing communities much more easily.

If we look ahead, it seems clear that custom build has the potential to become a key part in the UK’s housing delivery arsenal. It offers a route to providing more high-quality, bespoke homes that focus on sustainable living practices. We are now seeing government policy become increasingly supportive of diversifying housing supply, in addition to a growing public interest in more personalised, energy-efficient homes – so the possibility of custom build becoming a more mainstream option is a very exciting prospect for the sector.


MARK WATTS

JAMES BUCHANAN leads Oakwright’s custom build division. As a NaCSBA member, he is committed to making quality, energy efficient and design-led custom build homes more accessible. He focuses on helping clients balance creative freedom with practical project delivery. For more information visit **oakwrights.co.uk**

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product news

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£681

This walk-in shower enclosure is crafted from durable coated glass and chrome, with a stone resin shower tray and high-flow waste. Apex single panel walk -in shower enclosure and tray, 1,500mm x 800mm, £681, sanctuary-bathrooms.co.uk

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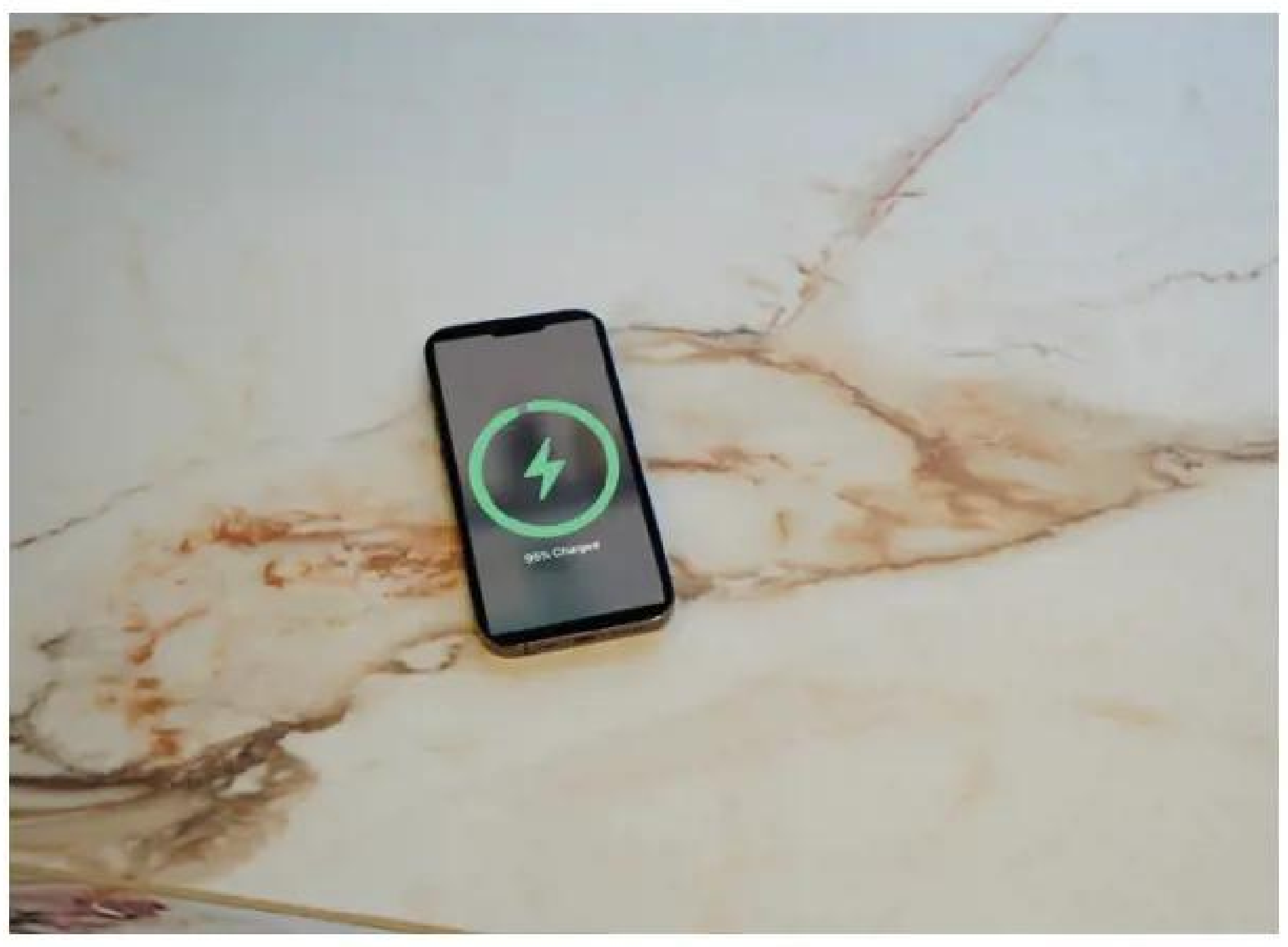

SUPERCHARGED WORKTOPS

Balancing practicality and style, this new worktop offers discreet wireless charging, secured underside of the surface. The range is available in three finishes and two thicknesses, combining ethically sourced quartz with cutting edge technology. **Konigstone Calacatta, part of the KonigCeramic range, £527 per m, konigstone.co.uk**

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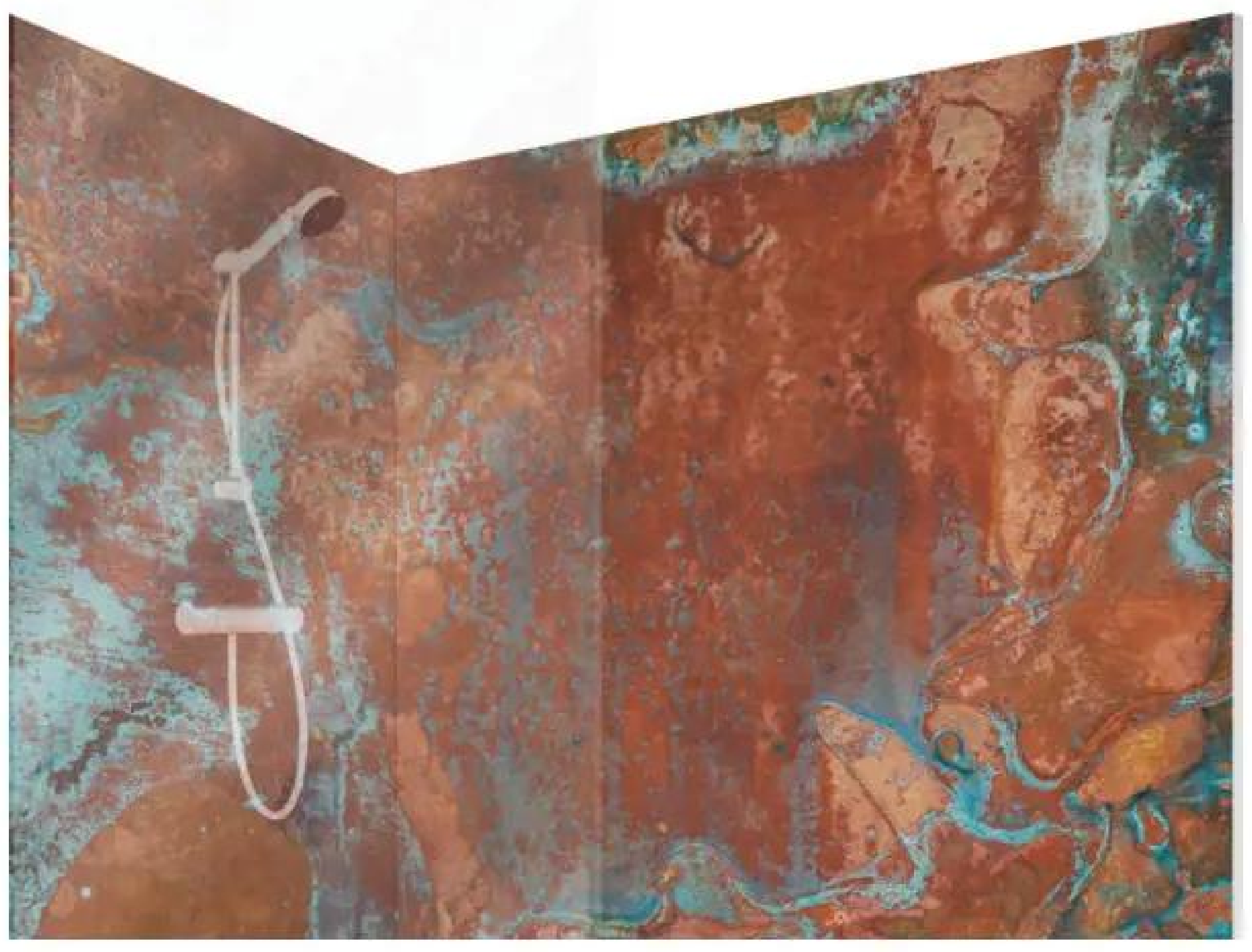
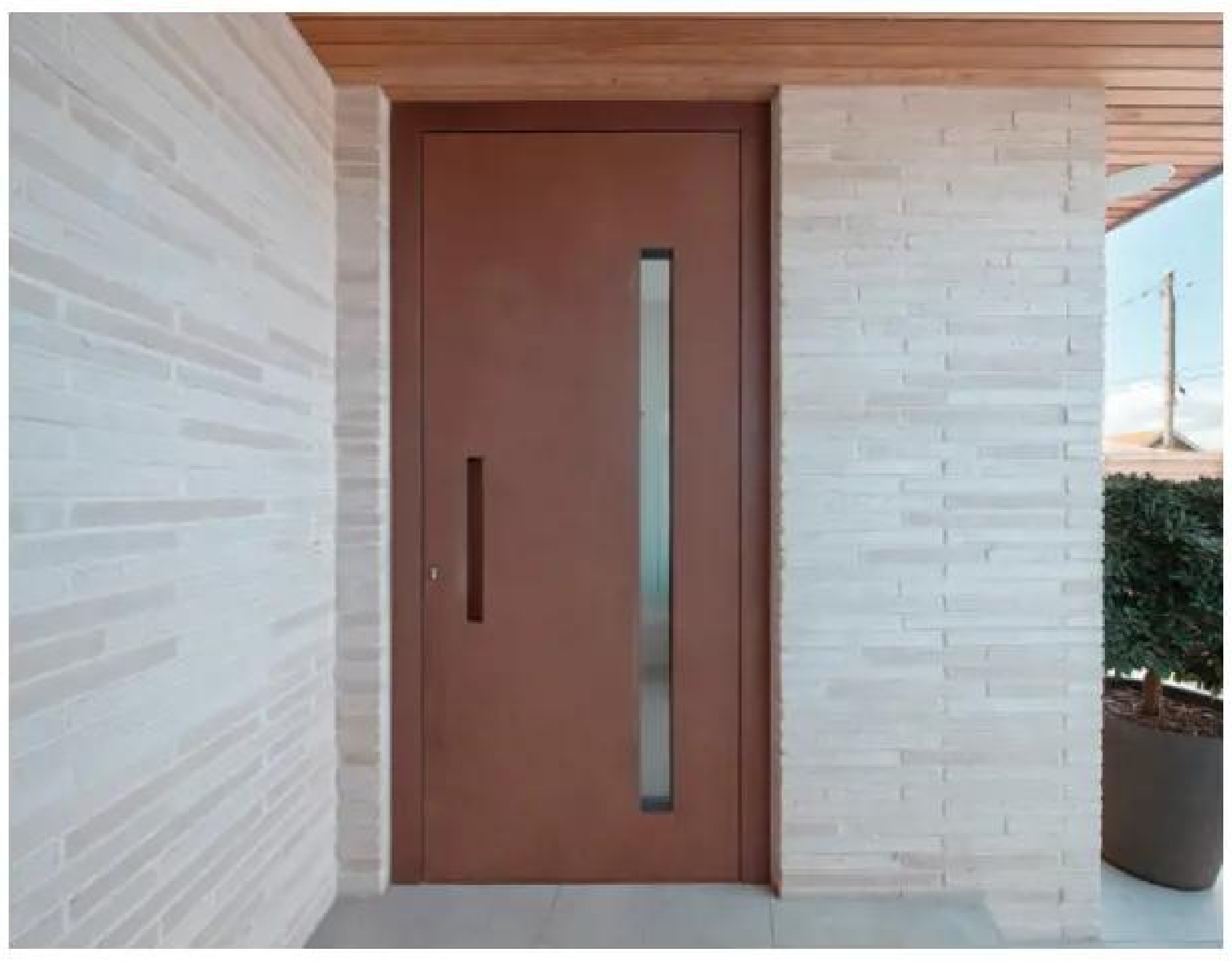
With a durable, stain-resistant and high-quality finish, this sustainable flooring is crafted entirely from recycled plastic bottles and manufactured using renewable energy. **Recycled Velvet Ca-rPET, £62.96 per m², alternative flooring.com**

FEATURE SHOWER PANELS

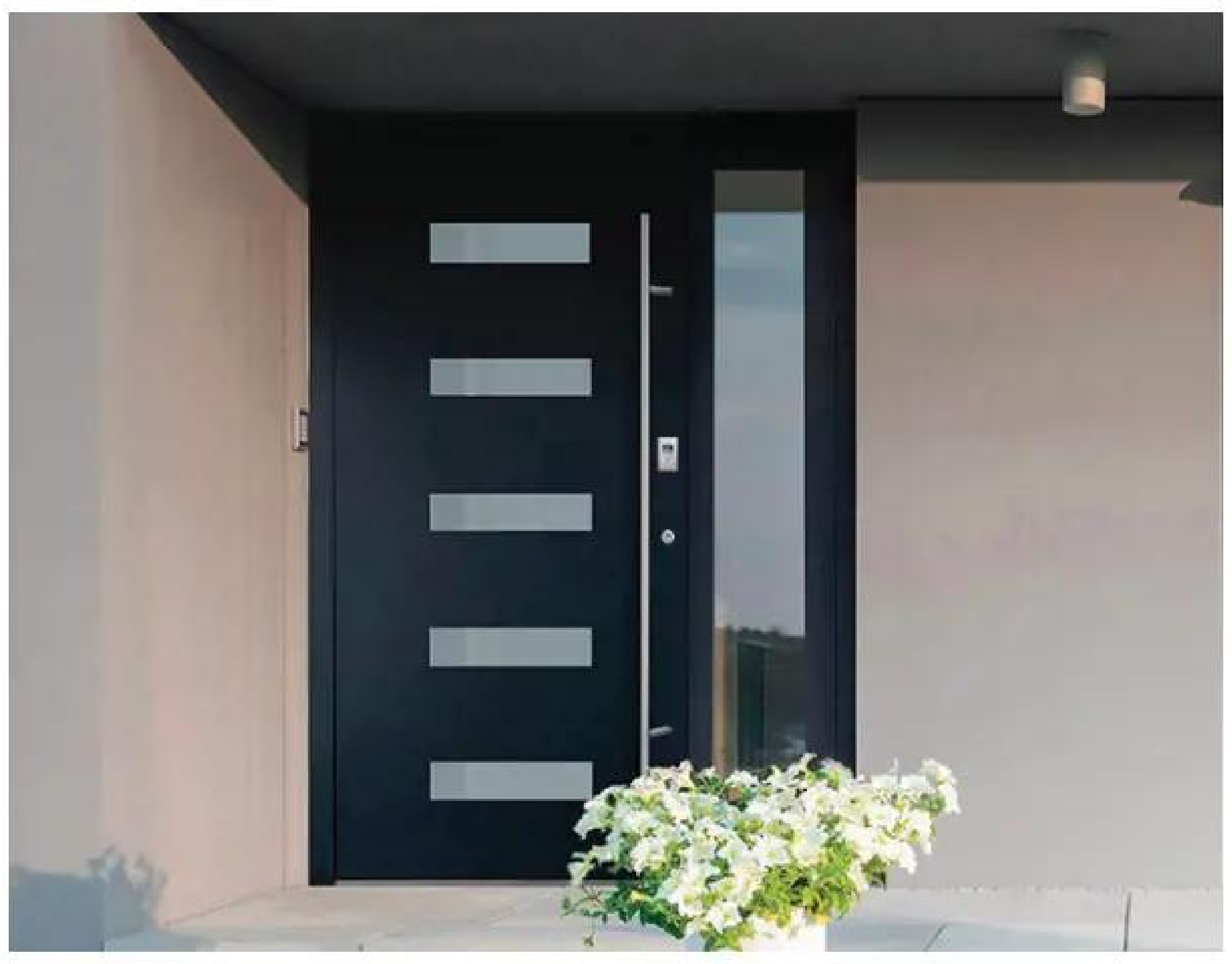
Offering realistic finishes, the Texture collection is presented in ultra-high-resolution images to achieve a striking, true-to-life replica of popular natural materials. Designed to provide a creative bathroom surface that's durable, simple and practical for your home. **Textures Range, Copper Patina, from £494, showerscape.co.uk**



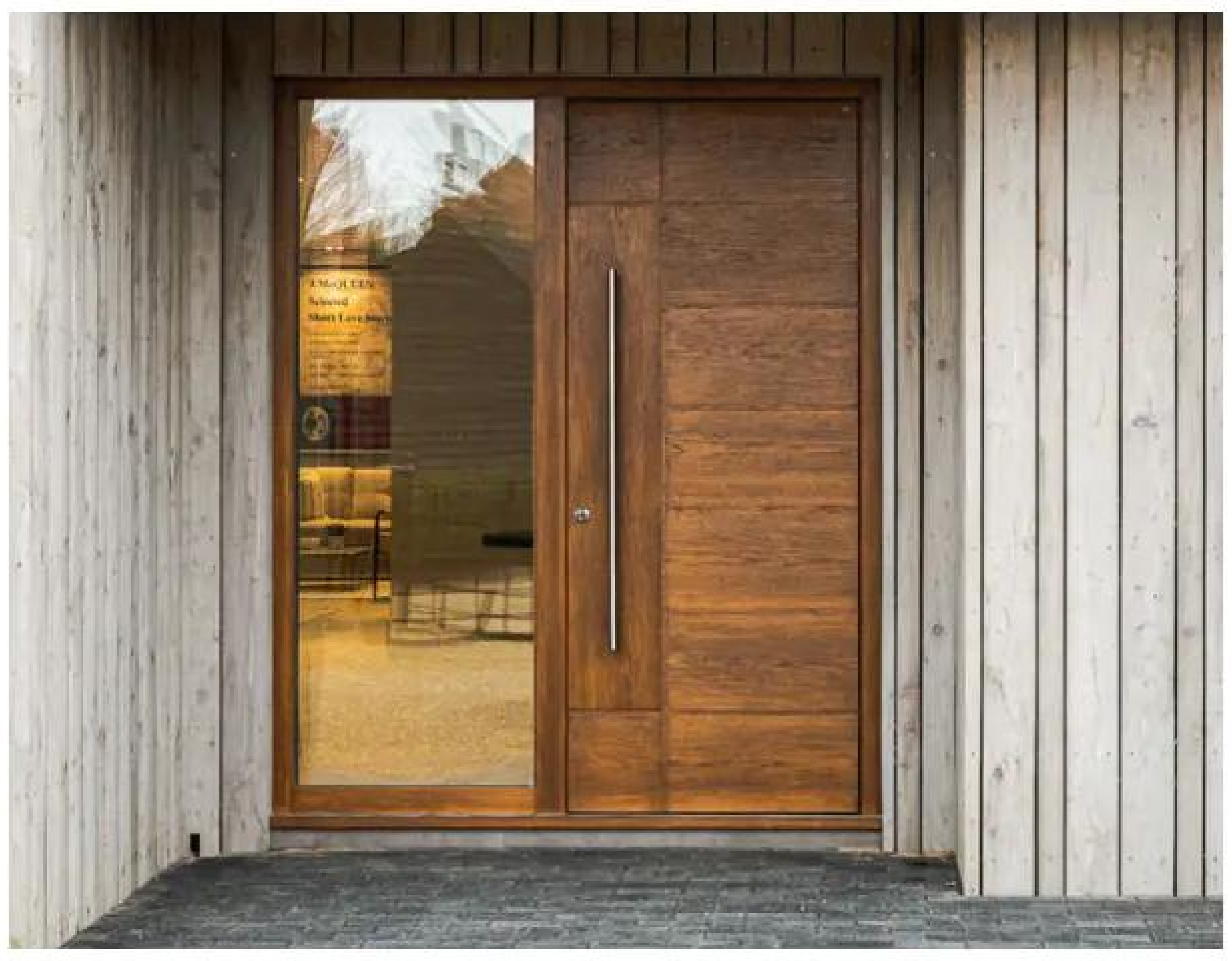
3 of the best CONTEMPORARY FRONT DOORS



1 *Corten Steel front door with concealed handle,* **£10,500, urbanfront.com**



2 *UberFront aluminium entrance door, Madison panel, Frame 3,* **£3875, kloeber.co.uk**



3 *Versare front door in red oak,* **£10,700 inc VAT, deuren.co.uk**

as seen on
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Best Glazed Doors

@thefoxesmaltings | Chris Taylor Photography

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interiors notebook

Create a cosy, charming environment with these modern heritage features, uniting contemporary living with a timeless aesthetic

1

2

5

4

3

Shopping list

1 *Timeless and smart, this loveseat is a refreshing take on the Chesterfield model. Its tufted back and arms alongside a large, deep seat cushion make this sofa simple and highly comfortable – ideal for a family home.* **Chesterfield chair in Oatmeal chenille, £599.99, daals.co.uk**

2 *Crafted in cast iron, this Victorian-style, double-ended, free-standing bath combines durability with classic form to enhance even the most modern of bathrooms. The exterior is also ready to paint for a bespoke feel.* **Heritage Baby Buckingham cast iron bathtub, £2,419, sanctuary-bathrooms.co.uk**

3 *Hand-applied limewash finish, smooth curves and French-inspired detailing give this chest of drawers a refined character. With six drawers, a solid oak build and antique-style handles, this piece offers functional storage as well as timeless heritage charm.* **Camille limewash oak six drawer chest, £999, cotswoldco.com**

4 *With finely hand-turned detailing and a gracefully flared base, this Victorian-inspired candlestick table lamp introduces a subtle air of tradition. Modern and period spaces can be enhanced with this design, adding a vintage twist to a home.* **Small Victorian candlestick lamp in Mahogany, £420, besselink.com**

5 *Add a dramatic feature to your interior with these classic black and white chequerboard floor tiles. Resilient, durable and low maintenance, this bold design offers a hassle-free, heritage charm to elevate your scheme.* **Midlake chequerboard tile, £102.24 per pack, porcelainsuper store.co.uk**

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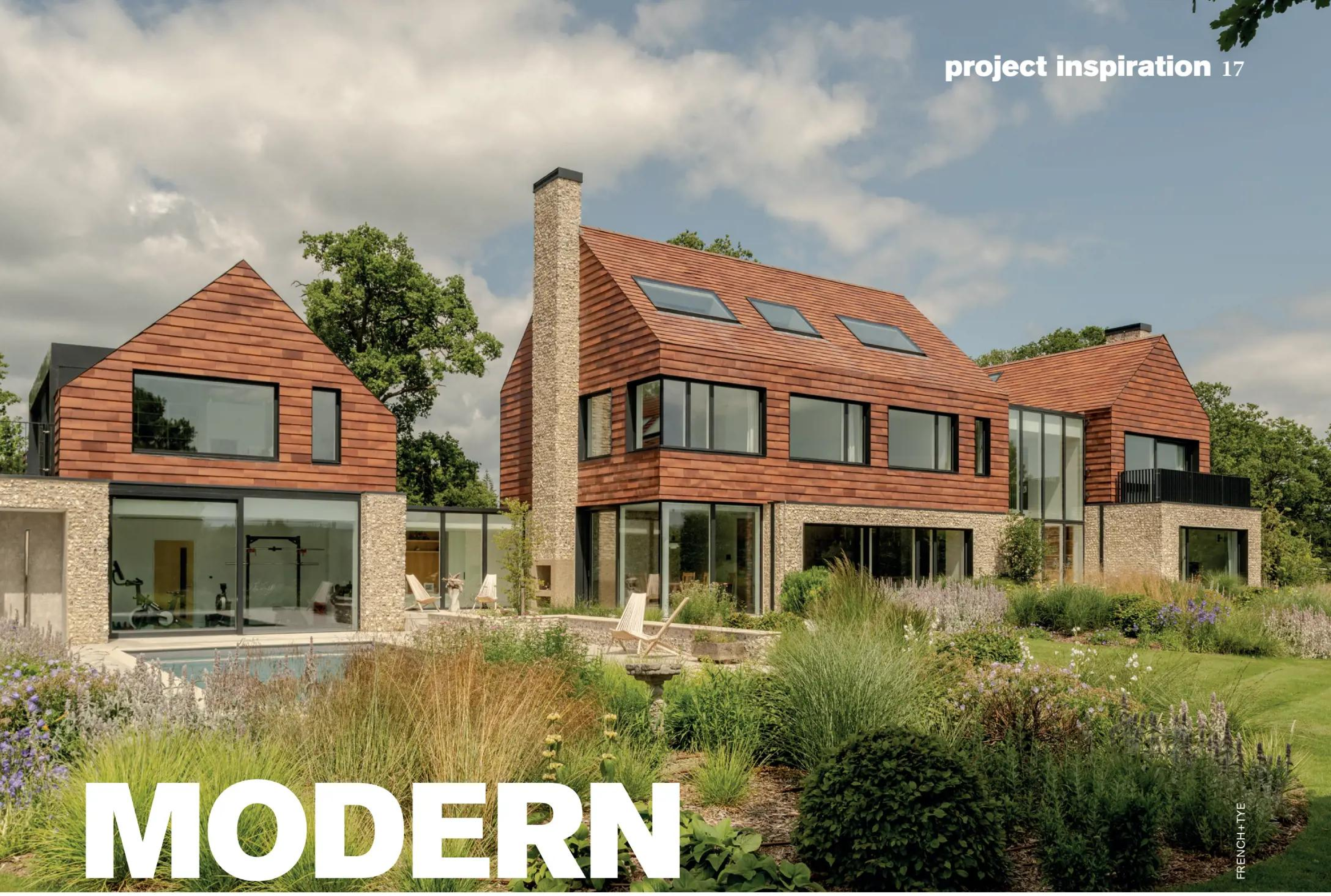
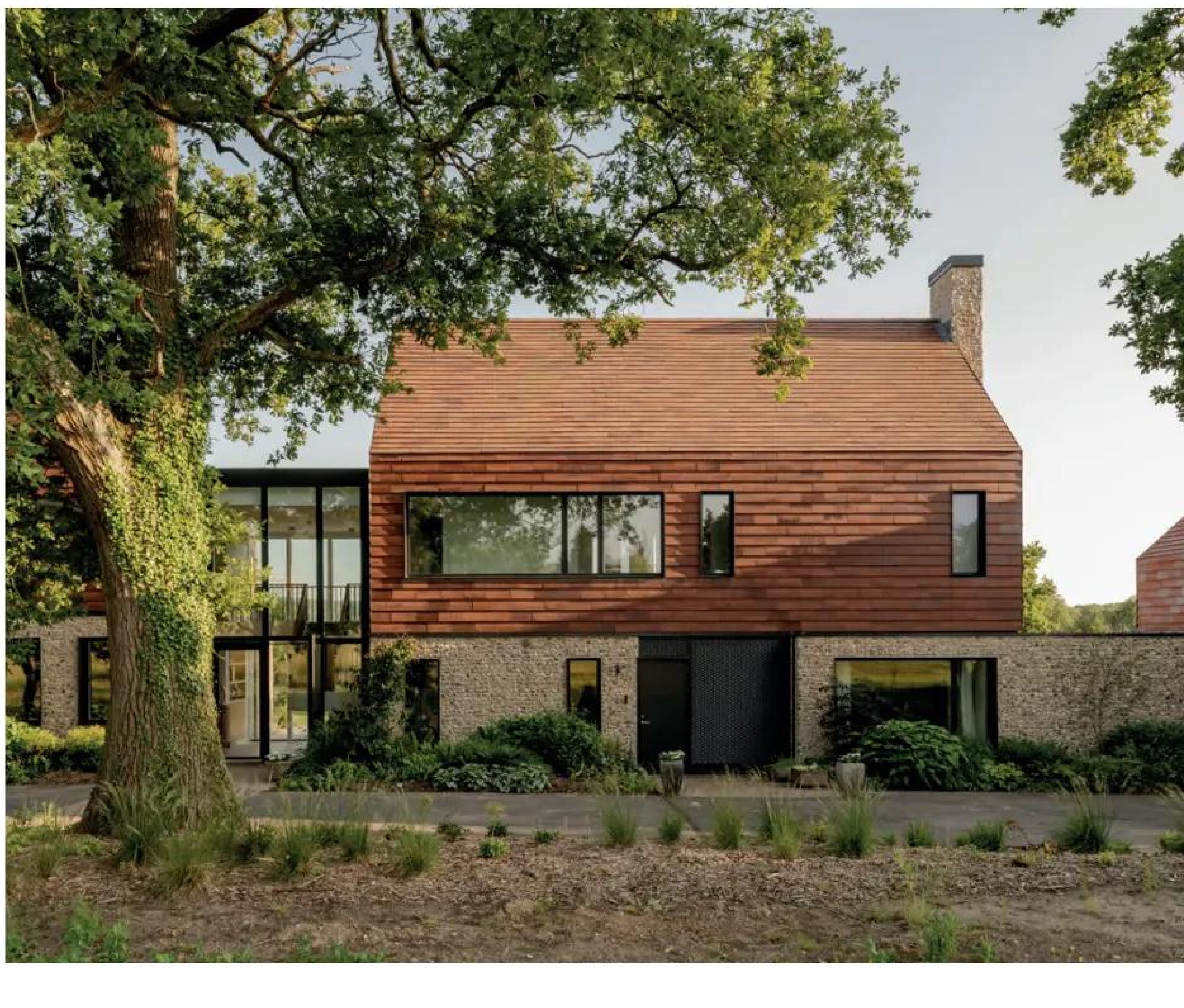


FRENCH+TYE

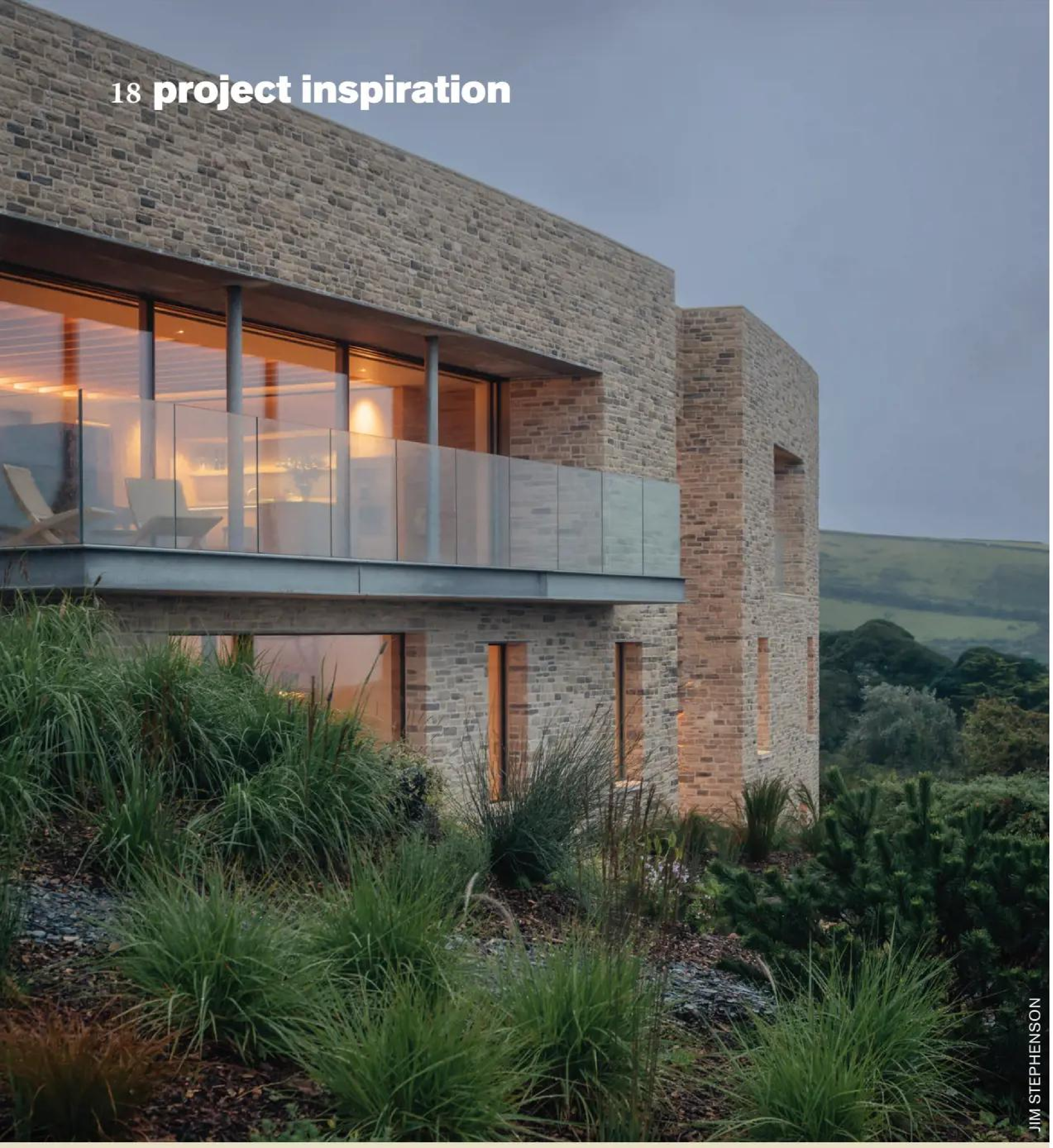
MODERN COUNTRY HOMES

Scarlett Deamer highlights eight beautiful countryside self builds and speaks to industry experts about how to create a location-sensitive design, plus the planning considerations for rural projects



PICTURE PERFECT

Designed by Selencky Parsons Architects, Bulls Barn is a stunning family home located in the South Downs National Park. Composed of three interlinked volumes, built from local flint and topped with clay-tiled pitched roofs, the house echoes traditional agricultural forms. Transparent links between the volumes introduce daylight into the floorplan and make the rural views part of the internal design. Sustainability is a core focus, with the property featuring a ground source heat pump, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery and solar panels. Native planting around the home helps integrate the building into the landscape. **(www.selenckyparsons.com)**



ROOM TO GROW

Bay House, designed by McLean Quinlan, is a five-bedroom home built for a family who love surfing, walking and outdoor life. Set within the rural hills of North Devon, the house responds closely to its steep, sloping site, with a gently curving form that follows the land's natural contours. Clad in local Purbeck stone and surrounded by native planting, the design sensitively responds to its landscape. Inside, a series of living spaces, including a lounge, snug and yoga studio, are arranged across three stepped levels. Floor-to-ceiling glazing brings in light and frames the views of the nearby farmland, while a series of terraces and courtyards allows the family to stay closely connected to the outdoors throughout the day. **(www.mcleanquinlan.com)**

EXPERT VIEW DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR COUNTRYSIDE HOMES

IAN ARMSTRONG, founder of Arco2, answers some common questions about creating a chic, modern country home

Q How can you ensure the scheme maximises the surroundings?

A contemporary rural house should not just sit within the landscape but become part of it. Each building should be crafted to respond to its context, resulting in a home that could only belong to that specific location. By blurring the threshold between indoors and outdoors, extending living spaces into gardens or including terraces that open to the wider landscape, you ensure a property feels truly connected to its setting.

Q Is it easy to blend modern and rustic architectural styles?

Respecting the local character and charm of an area is central to merging modern and traditional design. It's best to take local materials – such as stone, slate or timber – and use them with modern detailing. You should embrace this palette while also introducing contemporary equivalents like zinc, aluminium or copper where appropriate.

Green roofs are another way we soften contemporary architecture into the rural landscape, creating biodiversity benefits and visually anchoring buildings in their setting. The result is a building that feels both rooted in place and distinctly of its time.

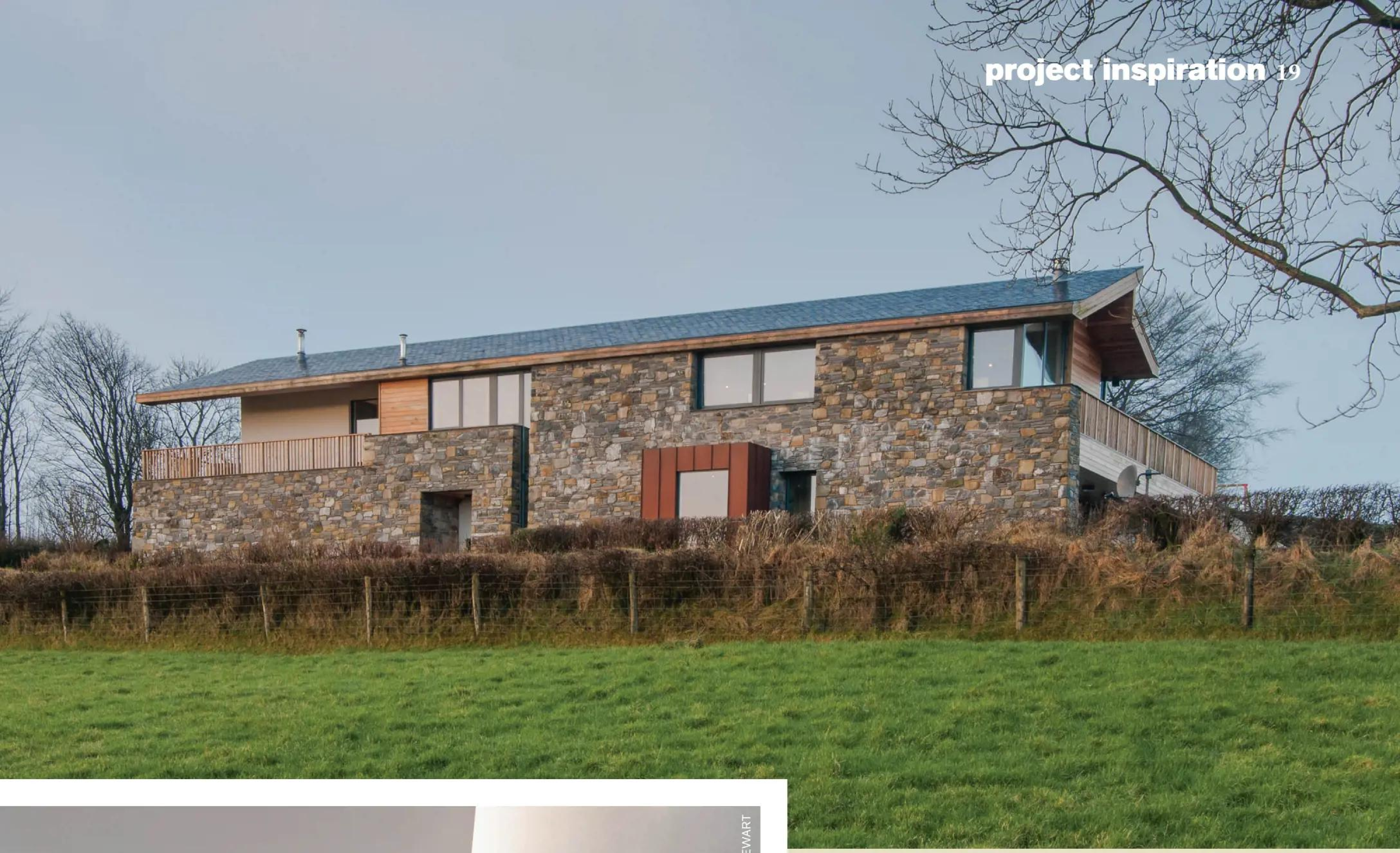
Q Can a modern country home be energy efficient and sustainable?

Good design is site-led, with sustainability woven into the concept from the outset – not just as an afterthought. By considering orientation, form, materials and building performance early on, homes can be not only beautiful and contextually sensitive, but also highly efficient, comfortable and healthy to live in. This approach ensures that sustainability enhances, rather than compromises, the architecture.

Q How can the internal design be tailored to country living?

Designing for rural living means thinking carefully about how people want to relate to their surroundings. This often includes incorporating practical spaces – boot rooms, utility rooms, surf or dog rooms – but it also means celebrating connection with nature.

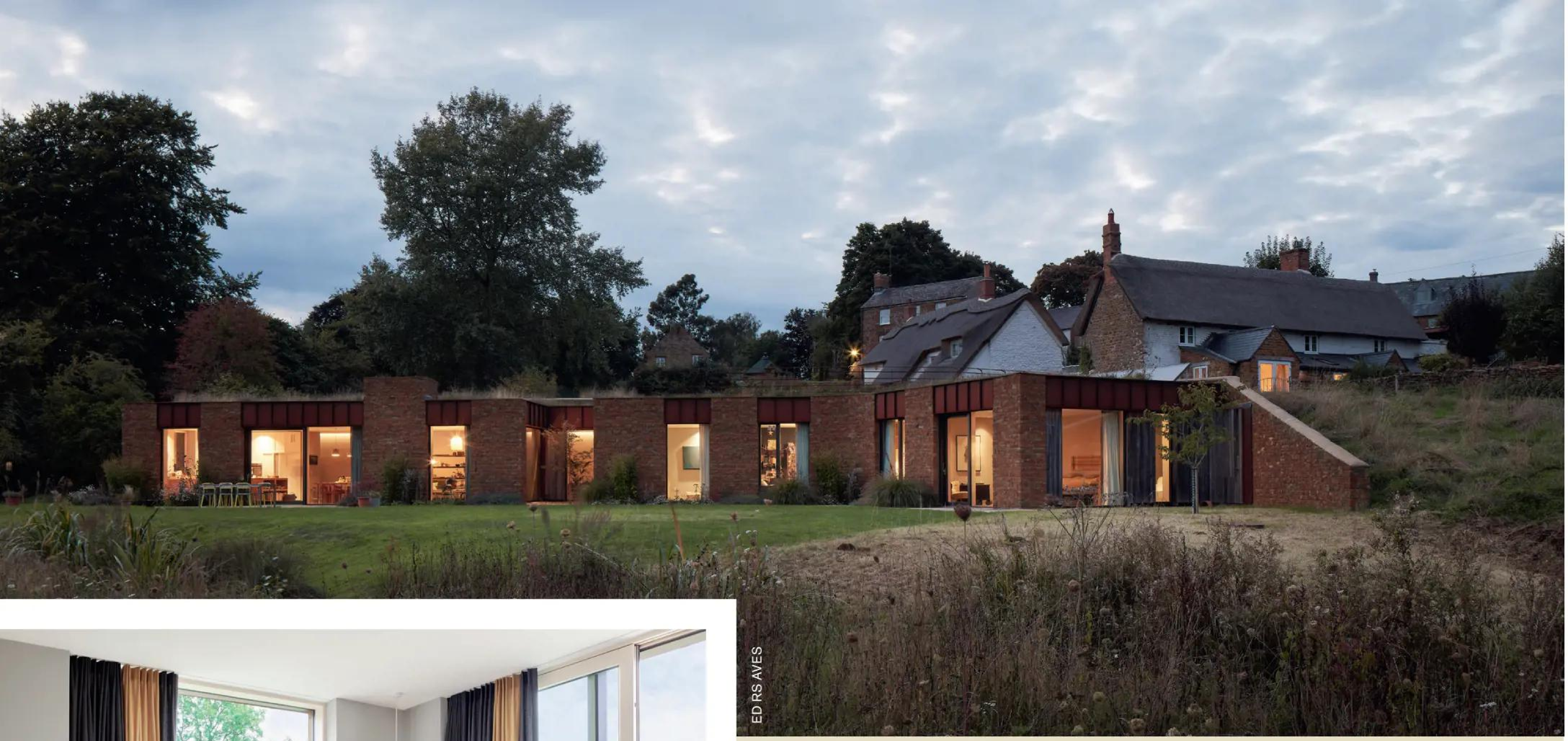
Framing views of the sky, trees and wider landscape, and creating a seamless flow between indoors and outdoors, enriches daily life. Extending the home into the garden with terraces, sheltered courtyards, or outdoor kitchens allows modern country living to be as much about the outside as the inside. Living in a rural area is about engaging all the senses – light, sound, movement and smell – features which are central to the homeowner's wellbeing, lifestyle and the spirit of a home.



2020 ARCHITECTS & EMMA STEWART

OVER THE HORIZON

Cairn House, by 2020 architects, is a modern home situated on an elevated, split-level rural site. Anchored by a striking stone finish inspired by traditional dry stone walls of the local landscape, it draws visitors naturally along a thoughtfully designed entrance path. Inside, the stone continues up to a double-height hall, leading the eye toward a cantilevered timber staircase and highly glazed first-floor living spaces. The master bedroom includes a flat-roof patio that connects directly to a raised garden, providing seamless access without descending to ground level. With natural timber and rustic finishes, the design blends gently into the surrounding countryside, creating a quiet retreat in its secluded environment. **(www.2020architects.co.uk)**

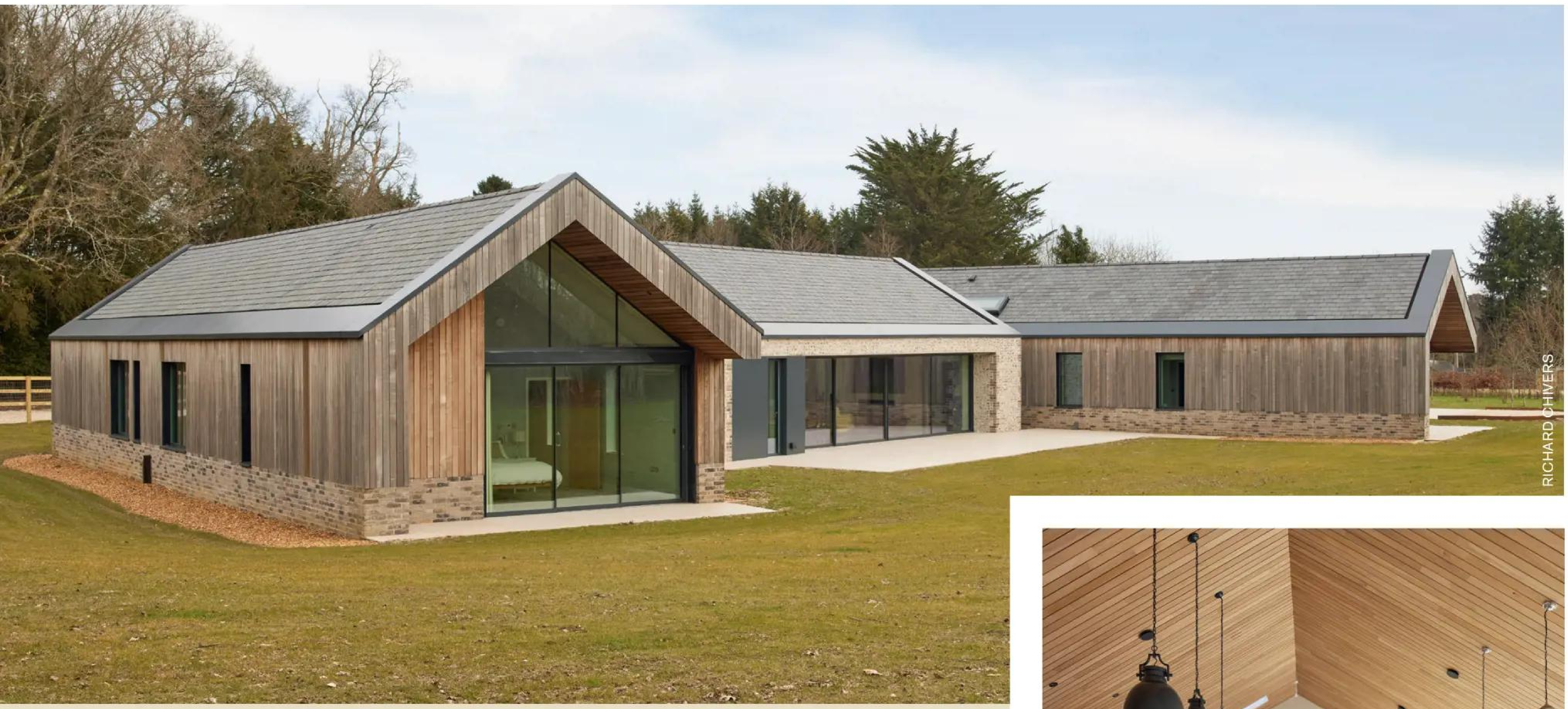


ED RS AVES

SANDRA VAN AALST

HILLTOP HAVEN

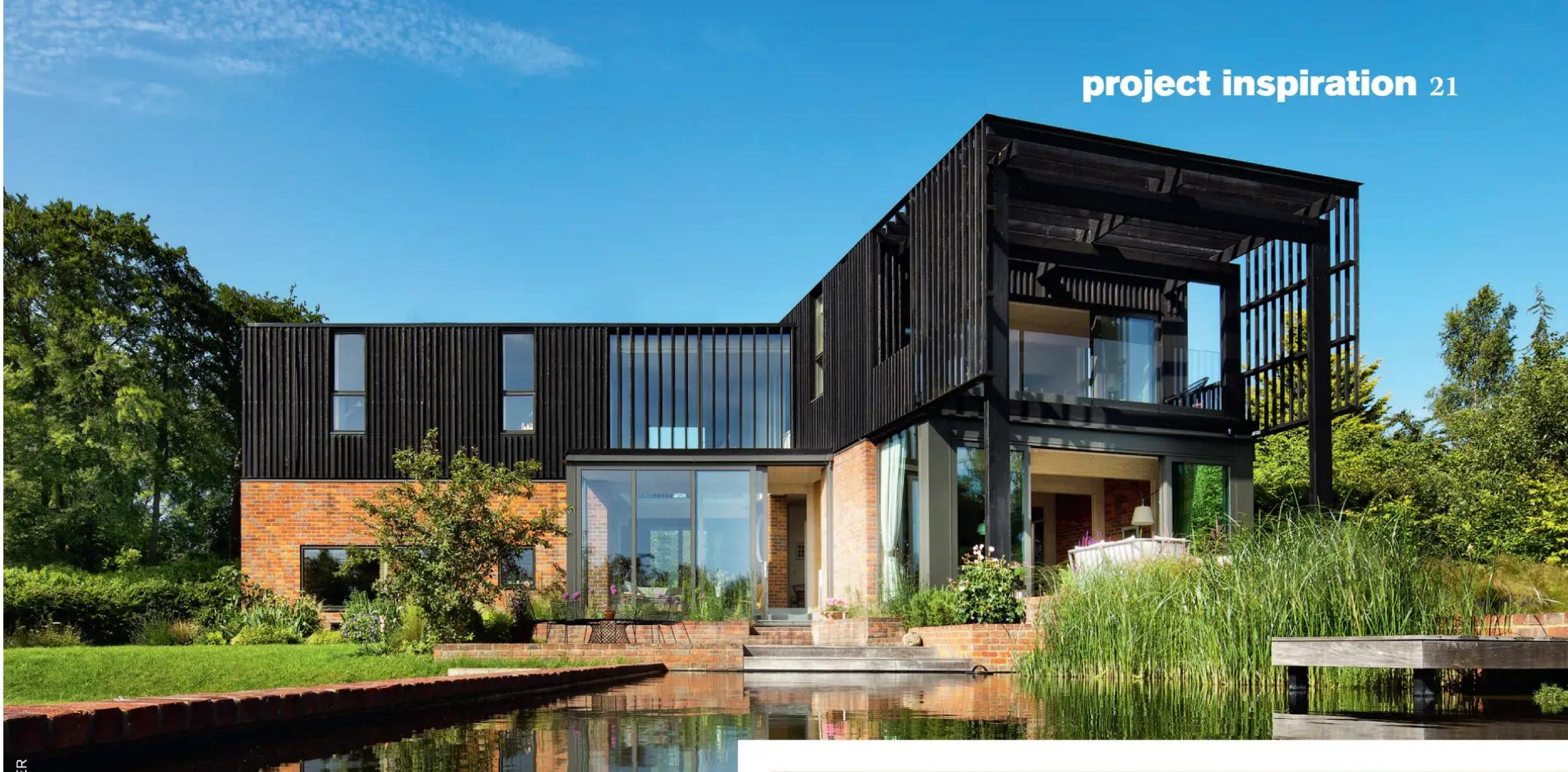
This low-energy home, created by Charlie Luxton Design, is beautifully integrated into the tranquil Oxfordshire hillside. Inspired by the piers of a nearby Victorian viaduct, the structure comprises of local ironstone and corten weathering steel. Inside, the space offers a calm, healthy living environment with a power-floated concrete floor and textured lime plastered walls. A rooftop wildflower meadow helps the structure blend seamlessly with its rural surroundings. Sustainable elements, including Passivhaus levels of insulation, solar hot water panels and a wood pellet boiler, make this home an exemplary model of energy efficiency and sustainability. **(www.charlieluxtondesign.com)**



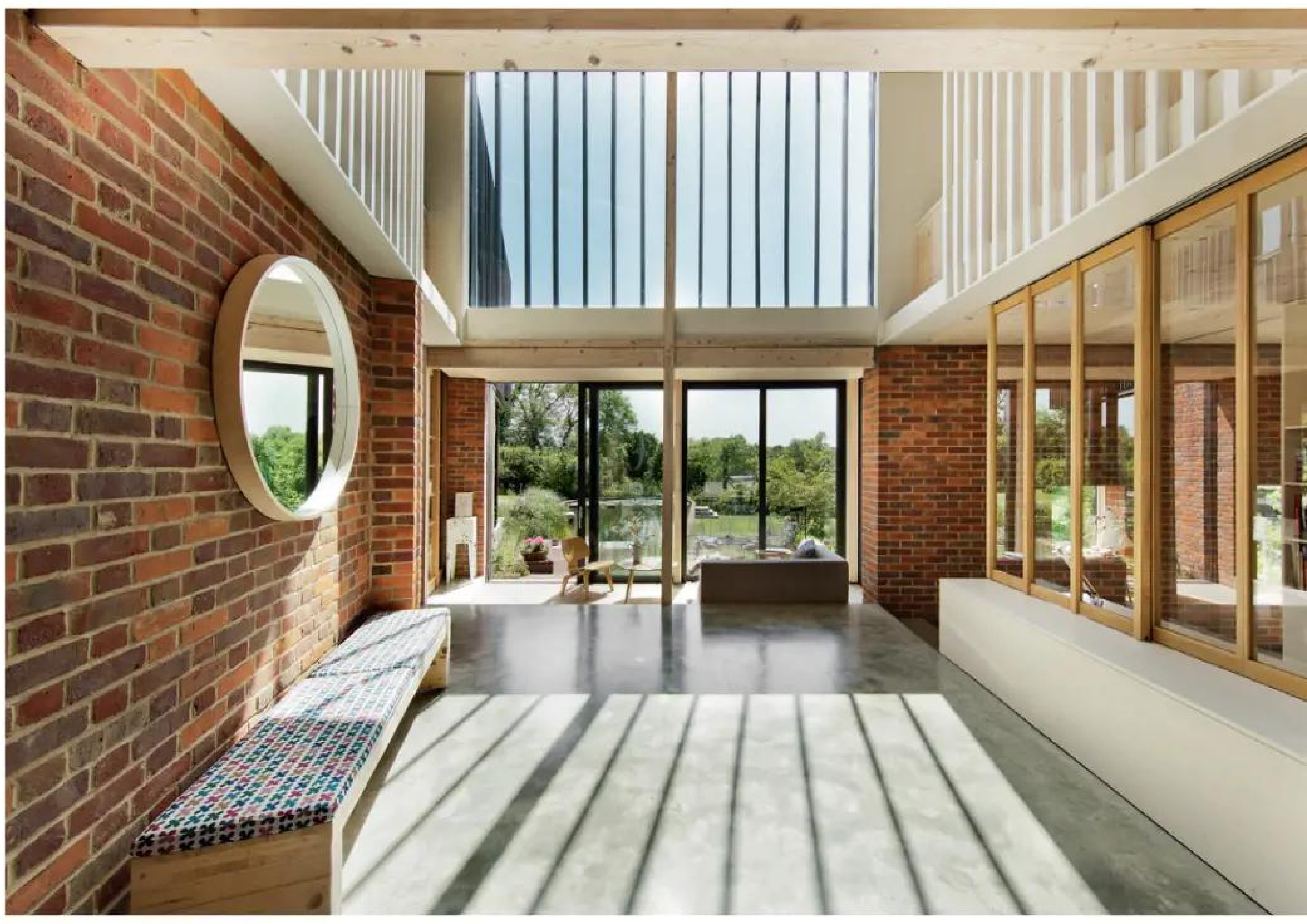
RICHARD CHIVERS

LAYING LOW

Nixon House is a four-bedroom property that was cleverly designed by Adam Knibb Architects to resemble a group of modernised barns. Its three wings are arranged in an offset, almost perpendicular layout to break up the building's mass and create a smaller appearance. The centrally located living areas and kitchen – the most used rooms in the home – are positioned to enjoy the best views and natural light. The exterior is clad in traditional materials such as flint and timber, helping the house blend into the natural environment. Timber-clad overhangs help to reduce overheating and glare while also adding a distinctive design feature. **(www.adamknibbarchitects.com)**



MARTIN GARDNER



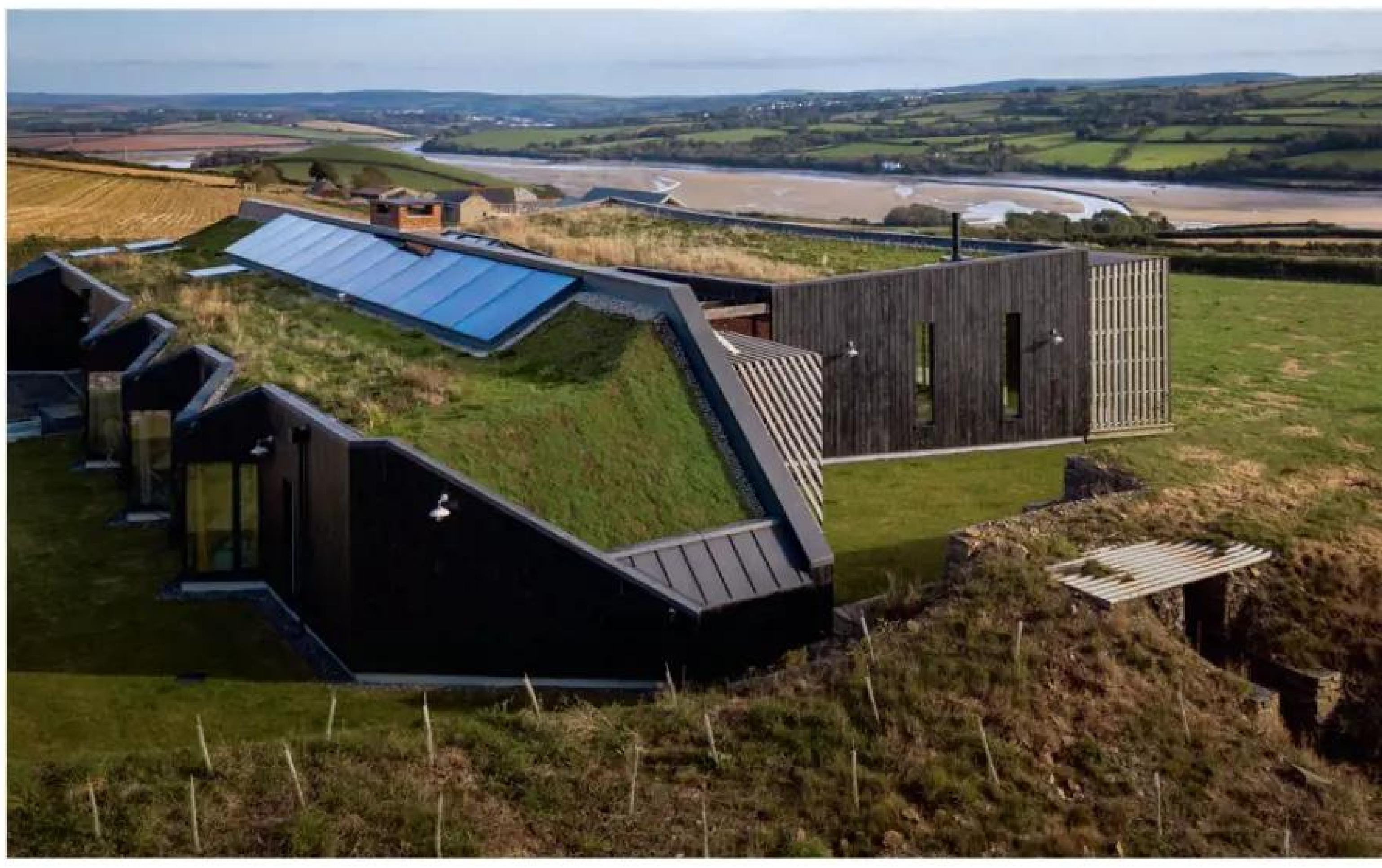
NEW HEIGHTS

Patch House, located in Buckinghamshire's Aylesbury Vale, is positioned on previously derelict brownfield land overlooking the Chiltern Hills. Levitate designed the home with a pair of cranked two-storey wings linked by a double-height hallway. The open-plan ground floor centres around a kitchen that tracks the sun throughout the day and opens onto the lucious gardens on either side. The house features exposed local clay brick walls on the ground floor, polished concrete steps that respond to the site's contours and a whitewashed cross-laminated timber upper floor clad in stained black larch, blending with nearby barns. Sustainable features include solar panels, a woodburning stove and a natural swimming pond within the landscaped gardens. **(www.levitate.uk.com)**

DREW SHEARWOOD

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Created by Arco2, Waterhouse is a bespoke replacement home designed to maximise panoramic views of the Camel Estuary and nearby countryside. Built on the footprint of a 1980s bungalow, it features flat green roofs that blend the structure into the landscape. A mix of dark stained and untreated larch cladding reflects the site's agricultural heritage. A central courtyard links the living and sleeping spaces, with a private rear terrace sheltered from winds. Bespoke features such as an insulated workshop and a surfboard store support the owners' active lifestyle and love of the outdoors. **(www.arco2.co.uk)**



INTO THE WOODS

Designed as a rural retreat for a couple in their seventies, this project by Boundary Space reimagines a traditional camp. The fully open-plan, flexible internal spaces have been thoughtfully designed to maximise to the house's location, with dedicated spaces to display the homeowners' art collection. The design blurs the lines between the indoor and outdoor zones providing a cosy haven from the elements that enhances natural light and ventilation throughout the rooms. **(www.boundaryspace.com)**

EXPERT VIEW PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

MARTIN GAINE, Build It's planning expert, takes a look at the planning policies to consider when creating a modern country home

It's usually difficult to get planning permission for homes in the countryside, because national policy directs new housing to within the settlement boundaries of existing towns and villages.

There are extra restrictions in the green belt and in sensitive areas like national landscapes. Green belts are doughnut-shaped areas of land around towns intended to stop them sprawling outwards into the countryside. In the green belt, new buildings are not permitted unless they meet one of the exceptions in the government's national planning policies. This is mainly works that relate to replacing or extending an existing dwelling, building on previously developed land (without causing a loss of openness) or infilling a built-up frontage within a rural village.

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) last year introduced the idea of the grey belt, which is land in the green belt that is lower quality and does not contribute to the government's green belt objectives. It now tends to be much easier to get planning permission for new homes in these areas, as the local council may look towards this type of land to help with the current housing shortage.

Until November 2023, national landscapes were known as areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs). Development on these sites is permitted, but only where there is a strong justification for it and where there is likely to be no harm to the landscape quality of the area.

Exceptions can be made in a few different circumstances, such as when knocking down and rebuilding an existing house or when extending and renovating an existing property. Additionally, the re-use of a redundant or disused building may also be considered an exception. Furthermore, the construction of a paragraph 84 house, characterised by exceptional quality, is another situation where exceptions can also apply.

Design standards are rigorous and planning applications for new homes are likely to need comprehensive assessments including visual impact and landscape studies. The whole process will typical take longer and costs are much higher than standard planning applications. Furthermore, there is also a higher likelihood of refusal even for thoughtful, well-designed schemes.

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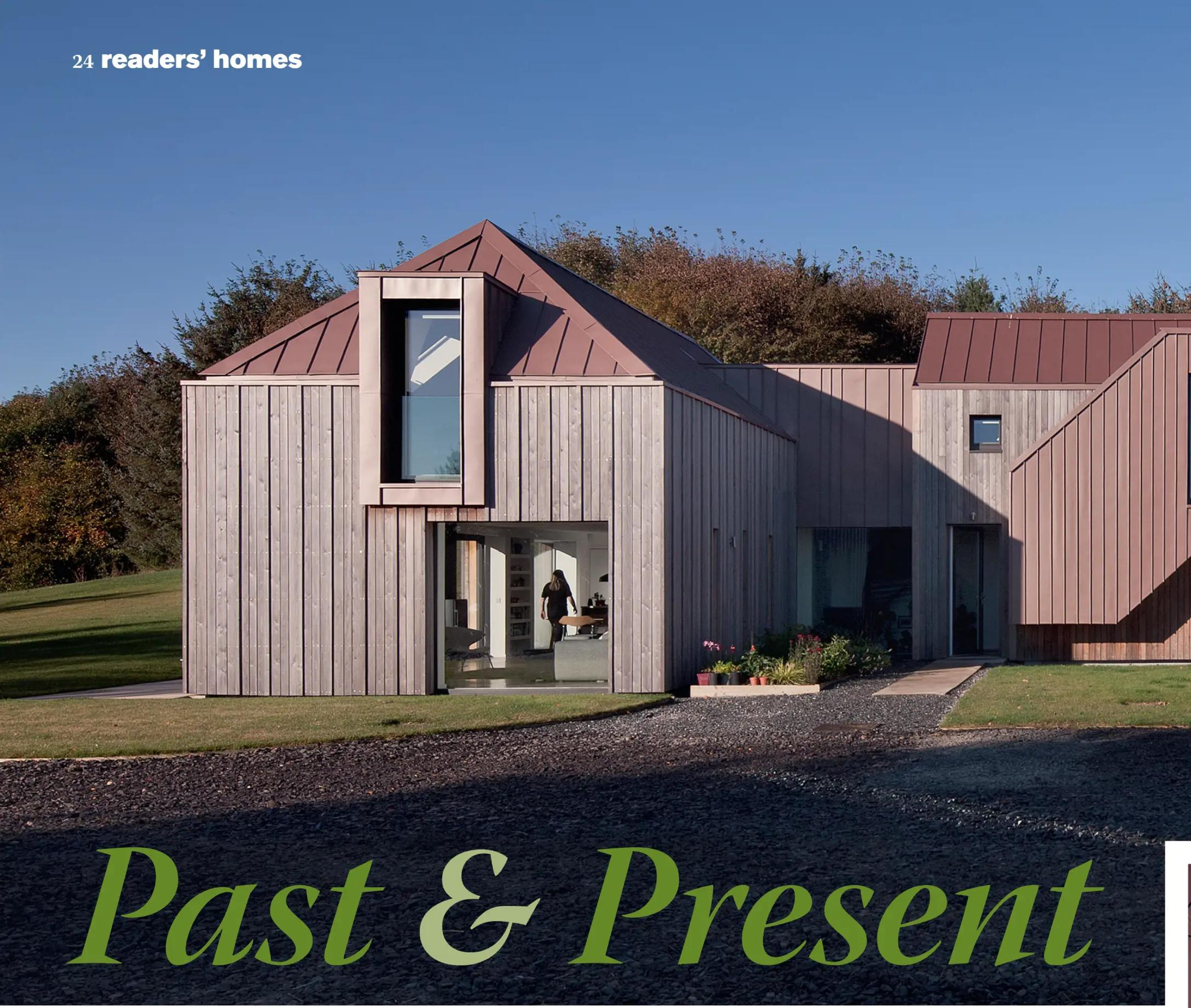


Past & Present

Neil and Sandra Caul have built a multi-generational home in the Angus countryside; a striking, futureproof farmhouse that's rooted in the area's agricultural past

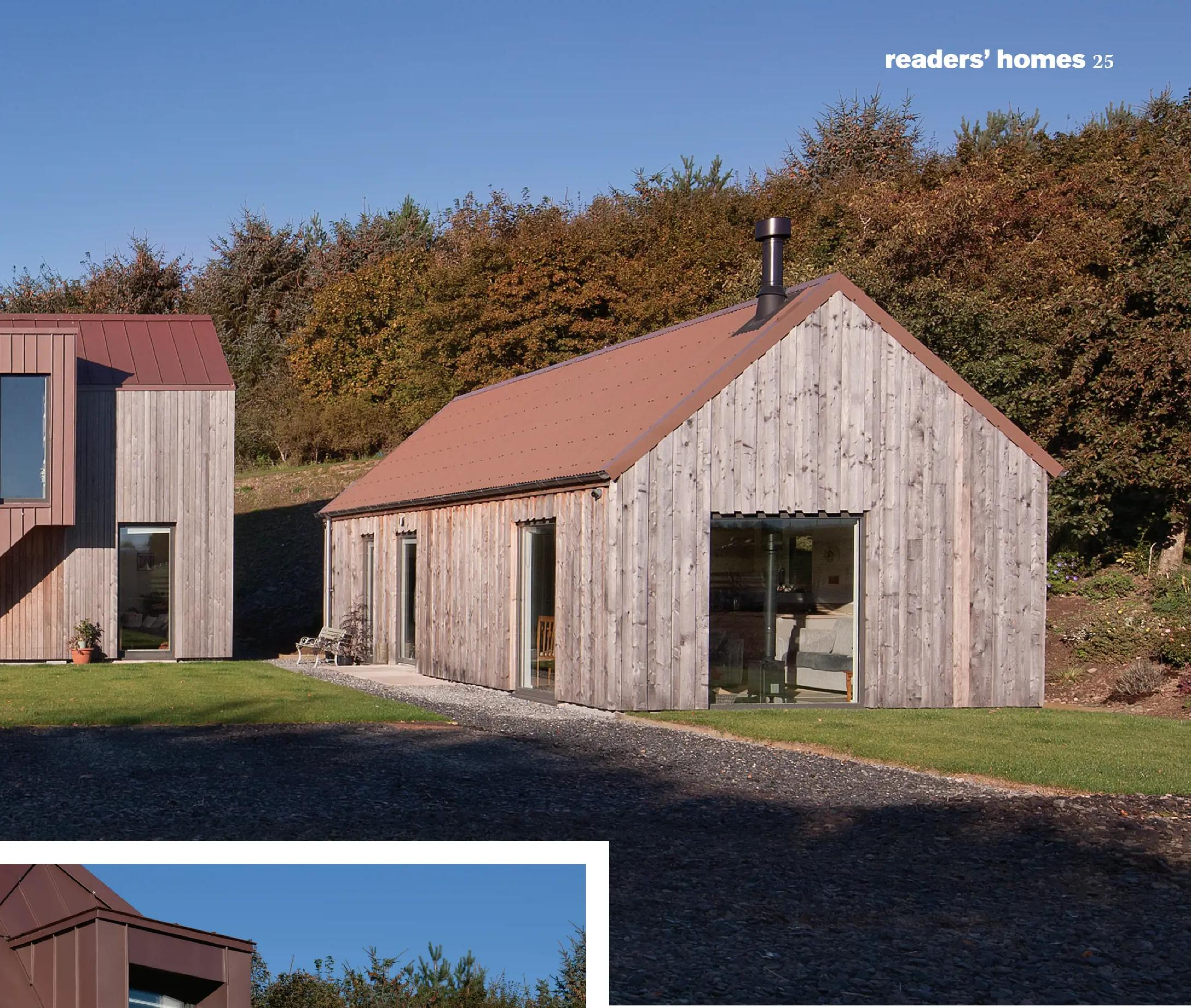
WORDS **CAROLINE EDNIE** PHOTOS **DAVID BARBOUR**

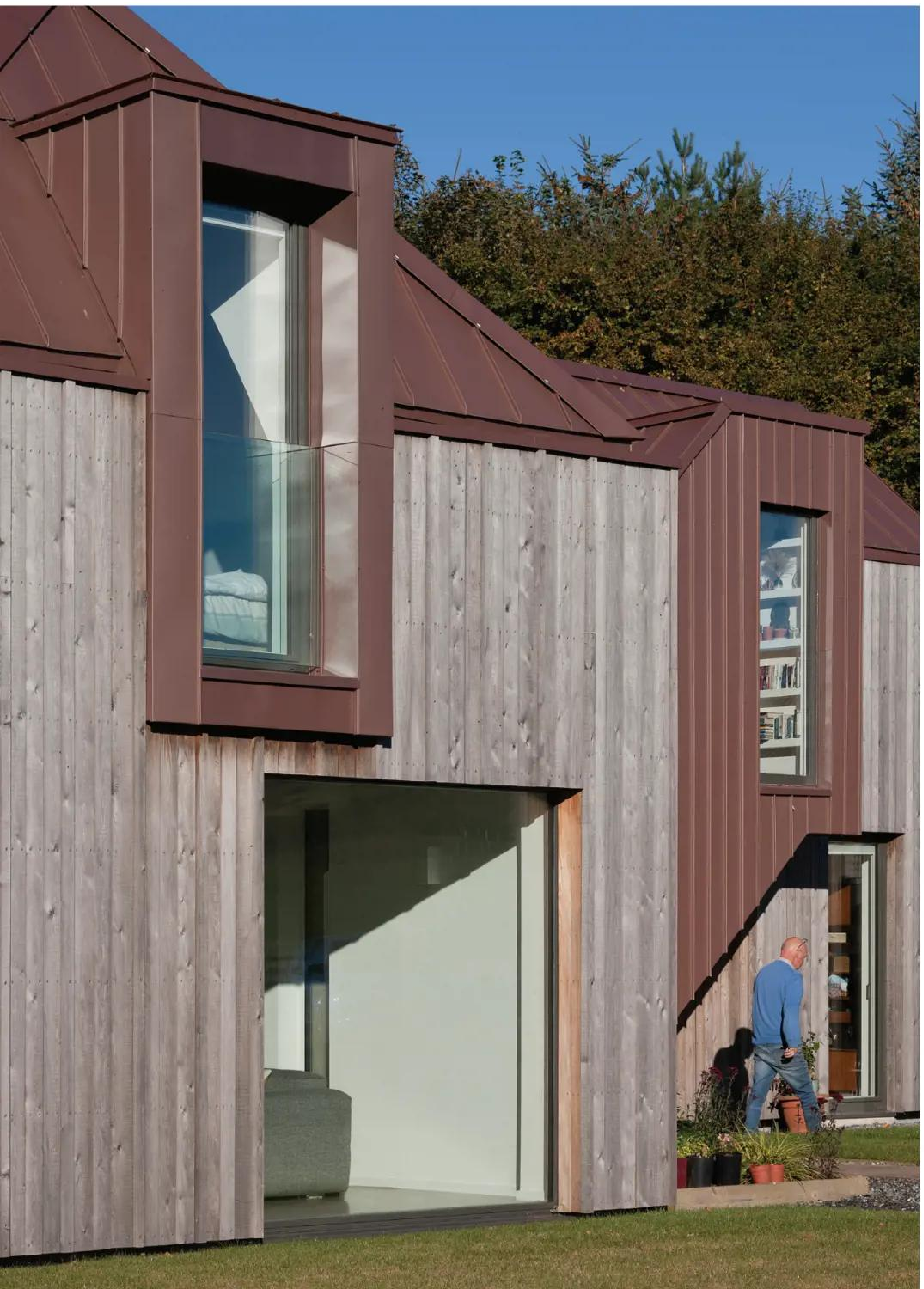
In 2017, when Neil and Sandra Caul decided to build a multi-generational home for themselves, their two sons Lewis and Gregor, and Neil's mother Mary, they were fortunate enough to have opportunities on their doorstep without having to go on the hunt for a suitable plot. The family had a smallhold farm in Angus of around 50 acres that they bought in 2010, living in the traditional farmhouse and running two holiday self-catering lets.

Their decision to build a new home on the land, precipitated by a desire to sell their letting business and move on, meant that potential plots were aplenty. However, they only had one in mind. A brownfield site, three fields away (around two miles) from their farmhouse, had a series of derelict farm buildings on it, previously used as weighing and storage sheds. A planning application lodged by former owners for a house on the plot had been refused and the planning authority advised that they did not see a scenario that would change their mind on their previous decision. "But the plot was beautiful with panoramic views, so we were keen to focus on this as the location for our new home," says Neil. "We then met architect Ann Nisbet at a trade show. We liked a house in rural Ayrshire that she had designed and taken through planning successfully. She was excited by our plot and right away had an understanding and vision that matched ours."

Design vision

In terms of Neil and Sandra's brief, they were essentially looking for a new house with a mix of family and private spaces for the three generations. It would be comfortable, low maintenance, incorporate an ecological ethos and be economical to run. "We also wanted a building that would blend into the hillside backdrop," says Neil, a livestock specialist and consultant, who alongside his wife Sandra, an agricultural research technician, now runs the smallholding as a working livestock pedigree unit. "I like a challenge!" says Ann of Glasgow-based Ann Nisbet Studio.





Above: The house is one-and-a-half storeys, reflecting traditional agricultural and utilitarian buildings. Positioned alongside the main dwelling is the annexe, which is home to Neil's mother, Mary

Left: The master bedroom features a Juliet balcony with fully-glazed door in the east-facing gable, also allowing the couple to watch over their livestock and the fields beyond. The pop-out staircase is clad in zinc, in a slightly different tone than the roof to create interest and variety to the facade

FACT FILE

NAMES Neil & Sandra Caul

OCCUPATIONS Livestock specialist/consultant & agricultural research technician

LOCATION Angus

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

STYLE Contemporary

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame

PROJECT ROUTE Commissioned an architect

PLOT SIZE Two acres

LAND COST Already owned

HOUSE SIZE 247m² (incl. 41m² annexe)

PROJECT COST £640,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £2,591

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED June 2020

BUILDING WORK TOOK 2.5 years

WE LEARNED...

THE STAIRCASE was originally going to be wooden, but would have felt too block-like. Ann Nisbet Studio architect Fay Goodwin came up with the idea for the perforated steel flight. This design creates visibility to see through it and lets more light in.

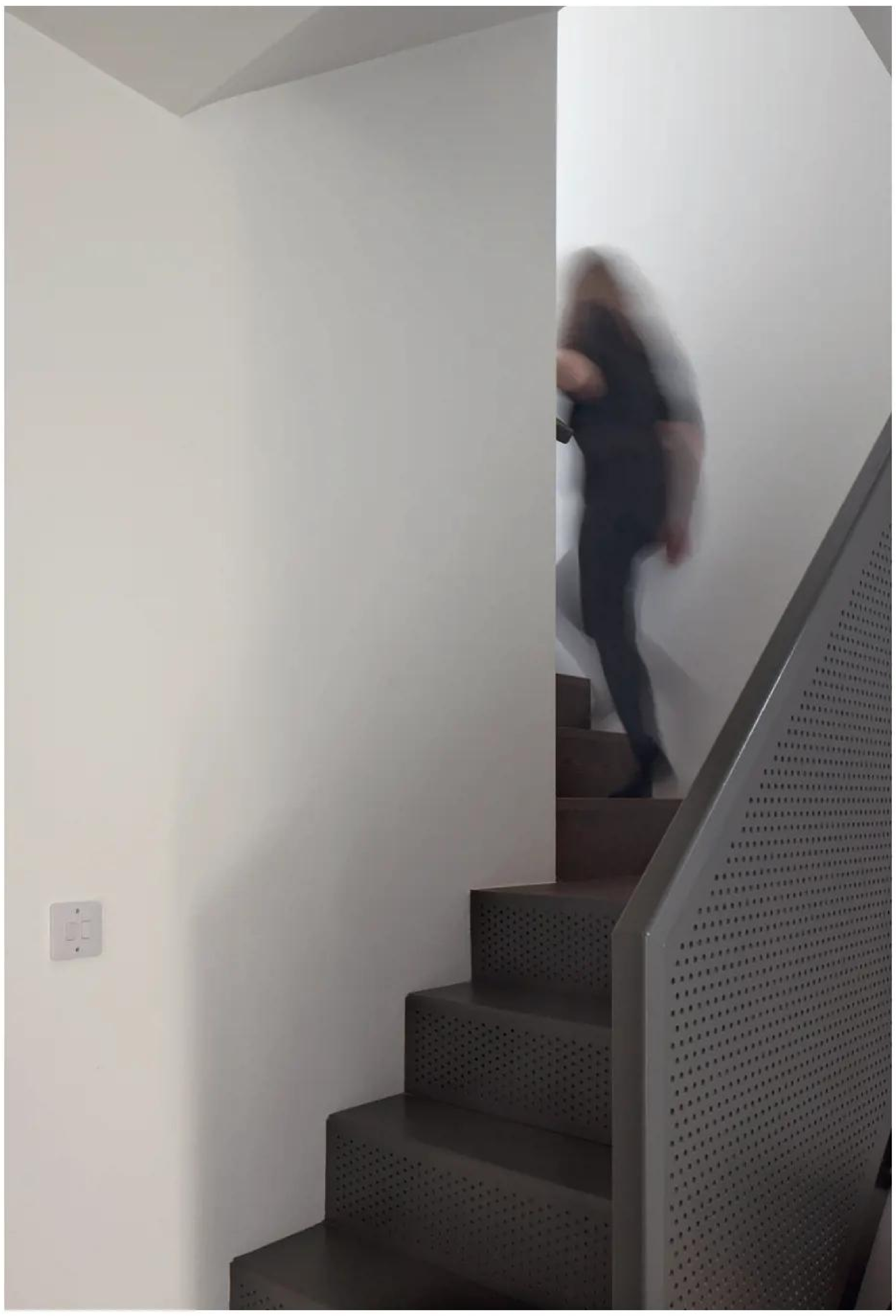
THE ORIENTATION OF THE HOUSE and the placement of the windows are so important for the quality of light that comes in at certain times of the day. The sun tracks around from the east-facing master bedroom and ground floor lounge to the south-facing living space and west to the 'evening lounge' and upper-level bedrooms.

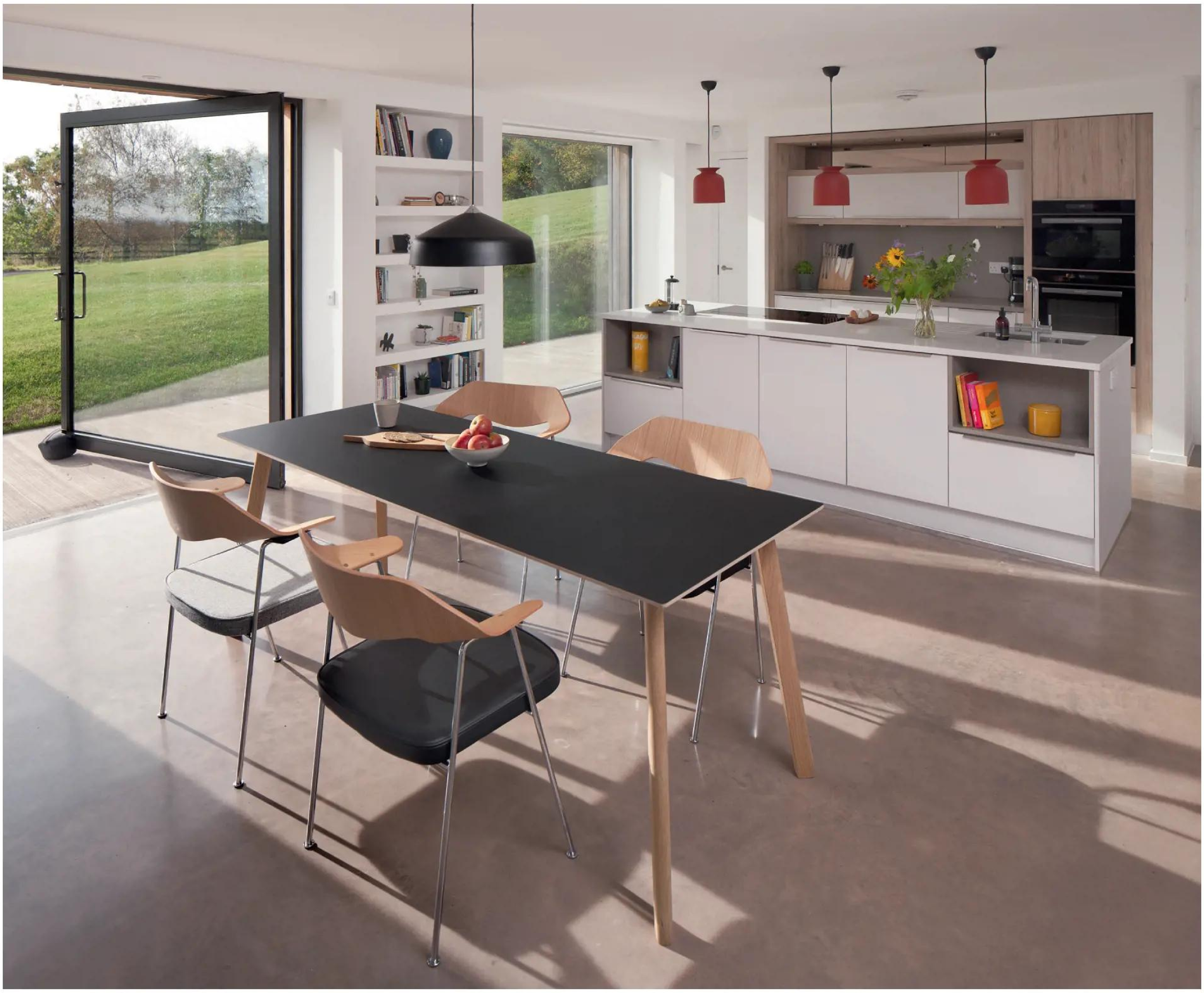
CONCRETE FLOORS are really efficient for the underfloor heating. This style is also incredibly easy to keep clean. We wanted a clean modern house, with no carpets and it works really well.

AN EXTRA BIG SINK in the utility area would have been good for messy hands when we're gardening. The bathroom is next to the utility room, but we don't want to get it dirty!

"We followed the brownfield planning policy of the local council in terms of working out the height and scale of the new house, as well as its location, where it couldn't be seen from the main road." Ann also followed a research-driven approach to the house.

"We carried out research into the local farms and visited 10, which we photographed and documented," she says. "We looked at the archives in Dundee about Angus architecture and the characteristics of the local farm building tradition, which is so rich as many of these properties were built as status symbols. They were prestigious schemes with courtyards and large farmhouses, which informed our design. We looked at the characteristics that the buildings shared, such as the hipped roofs and pop out stairs and dormers in many of the granaries and haylofts. In our final





Above & left: The functional open-plan living-kitchen-dining area was a key part of the brief. It's a large social space for family and friends to get together. The kitchen was designed to be very practical. One door leads to a pantry and another leads to a food store. The polished concrete floor has a warm tone through it

The bridge outside leads to the upstairs lounge through a single glazed door

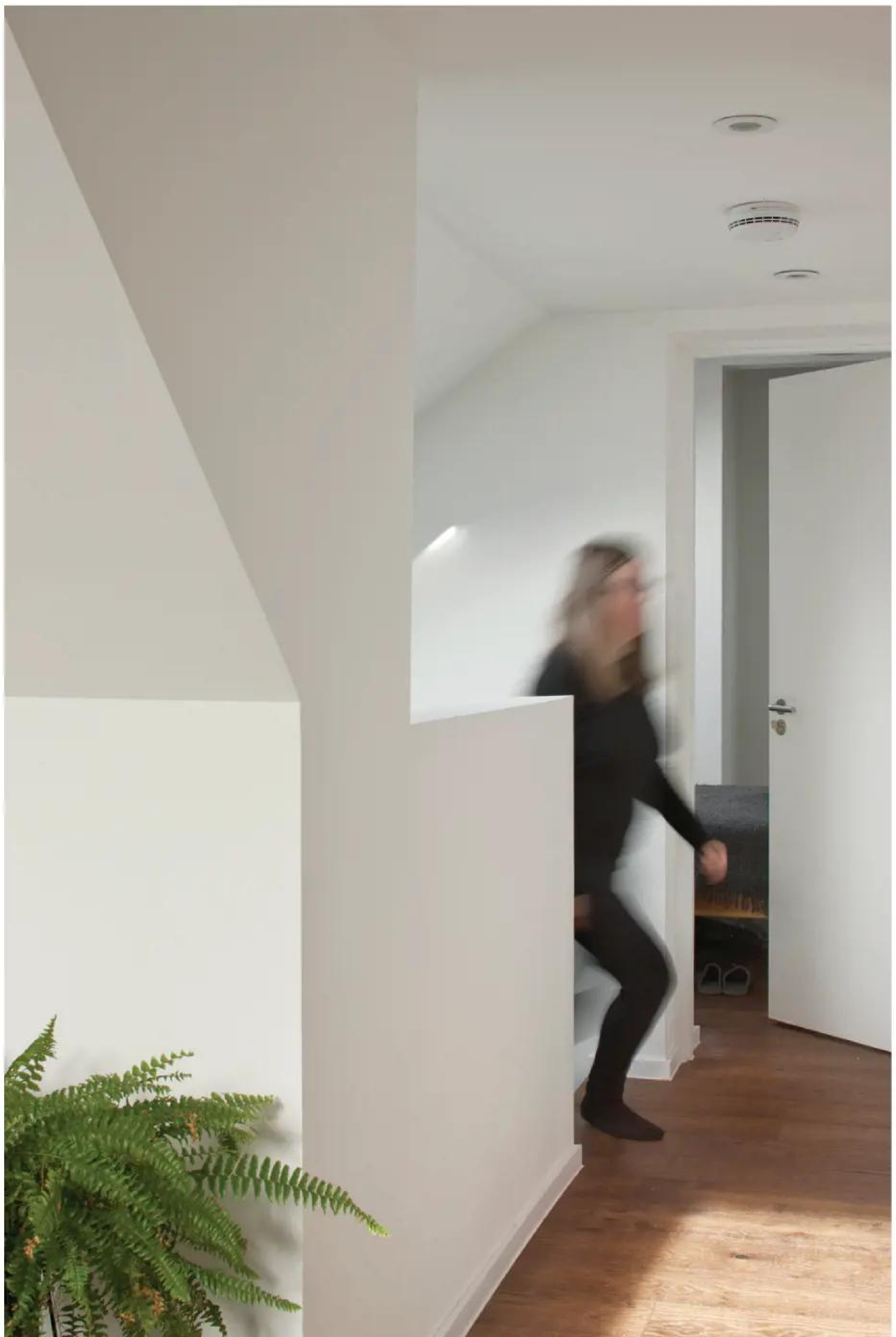
design we referenced many of these distinctive characteristics." Ann's meticulous and thoughtful approach enabled the scheme to gain planning approval without any issues.

Inspired by agricultural surroundings

The overall design, positioned around the footprint of the original farm sheds, features three buildings with a shared courtyard. The main house has two one-and-a-half storey buildings arranged as an L-shaped plan. The third structure is a one-bedroom annexe.

The first view on approach from the road is the south-facing facade of the main house, which features the shared open-plan family living, kitchen and dining area. The three window openings reflect the form of rural Angus cart shed buildings. Looking out to views over the Perthshire hills and Fife beyond. Neil and Sandra's master bedroom, ensuite and dressing room are directly above. The bedroom's juliet balcony enjoys east-facing views to Dundee and the River Tay. A continuous corridor from the master suite leads to a sheltered west-facing evening lounge, which can be entered directly from a new perforated steel bridge.

On the ground floor, a linking corridor from the main living area leads to the second sleeping wing, with a guest bedroom, family bathroom and plant room. Directly above are Lewis and Gregor's bedrooms. These can be accessed using the main internal staircase or via a pop-out staircase – expressed externally at the front of the house – that leads up to the sleeping quarters without having to go



Left: The first-floor has rooflights, which have been incorporated to minimise framing, enhancing light and views. The floors upstairs are a dark smoked oak forming a lovely contrast to the light floor downstairs. It was designed to create the cocooned feeling of a traditional farm loft

through the living spaces. The final element of the cluster is the annexe, Mary's home, designed to reflect her desire for a simple, no fuss country cottage over one level – easy to run, heat and clean.

Energy efficient build

Construction involved a fabric first approach, with deep timber frame walls and roofs. The main house is clad in zinc and Siberian larch boards, created in the same rhythm as the zinc roof seams. The annexe complements the main house. It's a simple design with unfussy materials – rougher Scottish larch and corrugated metal sheet roofing. The slightly different cladding arrangements creates the idea of a cluster of buildings that relate to each other but are slightly different, to reflect historic farmsteads.

Optimum energy efficiency and airtightness has been achieved via Rockwool insulation and triple glazed windows throughout the house. Renewable systems include a ground source heat pump with a 195m deep borehole that supplies the wet underfloor heating throughout the ground floor of the house and annexe, with radiators on the first floor. A mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR) system circulates fresh air and a 20.2kW array of solar PV panels, mounted in the garden, generate the electricity. Any excess is stored in a set of solar batteries. A water borehole located around 30 metres from the main house supplies the drinking water.

"We wanted to make a low impact with the energy systems and also create cost savings for ourselves," says Sandra. "Performance-

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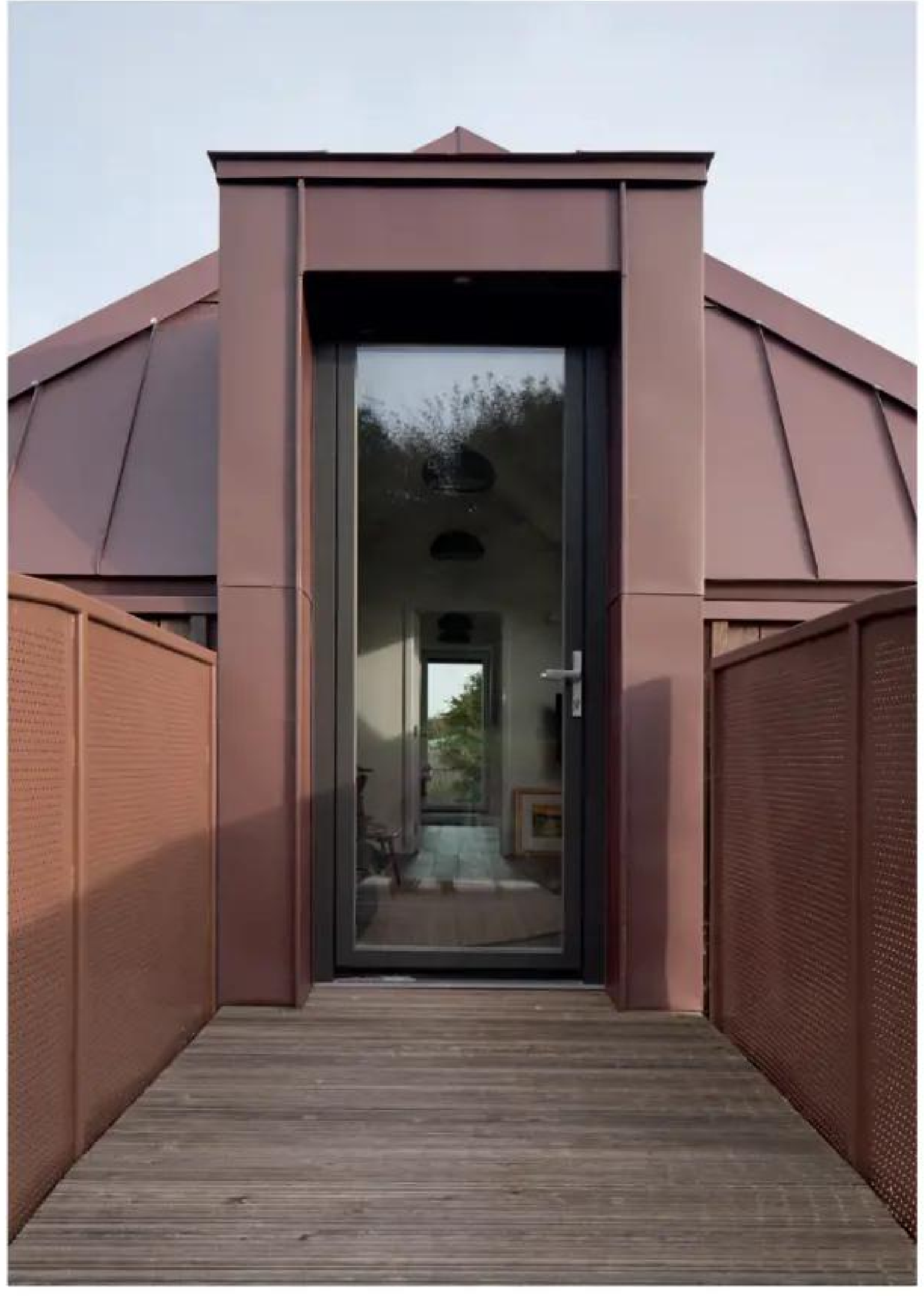


Above & right: The bridge is laser cut perforated steel, similar to the staircases, to create a sense of continuity between the indoor and outdoor spaces. It leads to the upstairs lounge

wise the house is working very well. We get a lot of solar gain and the underfloor heating combined with the triple glazing is great. We were able to access the Feed-in Tariff [now replaced by the less-generous Smart Energy Guarantee], so we can sell electricity that we don't need back to the grid." The couple hope that the combination of excellent insulation, eco technologies and Feed-in Tariff payments will result in net zero bills.

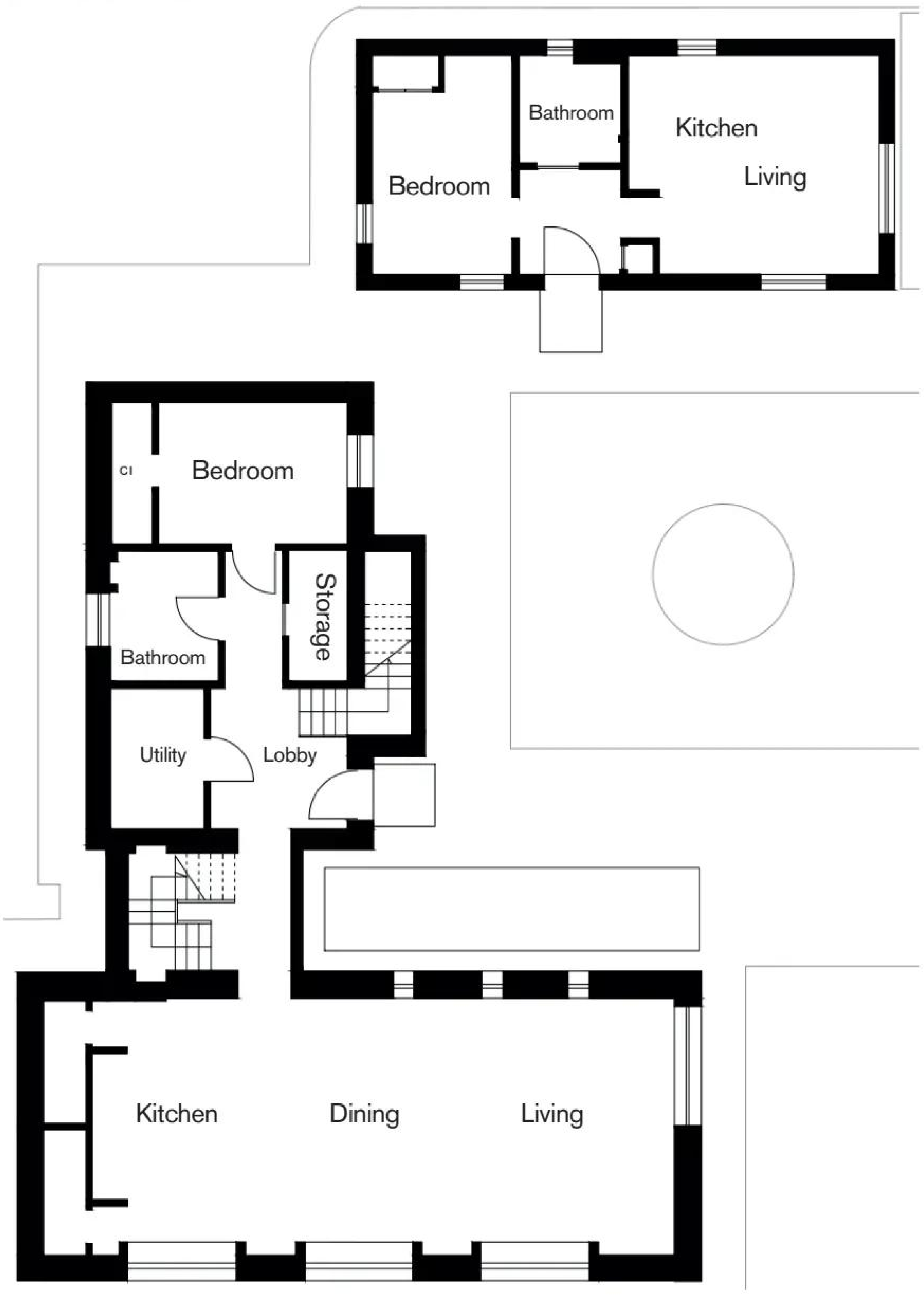
Unprecedented circumstances

The build turned out to be a long one for the family, through no fault of their own. "On the Monday we went on site, where the outline of the building was sprayed out on the ground prior to beginning the concrete slab foundations. The next day the site locked down when the Covid lockdown announcement was made," says Ann.

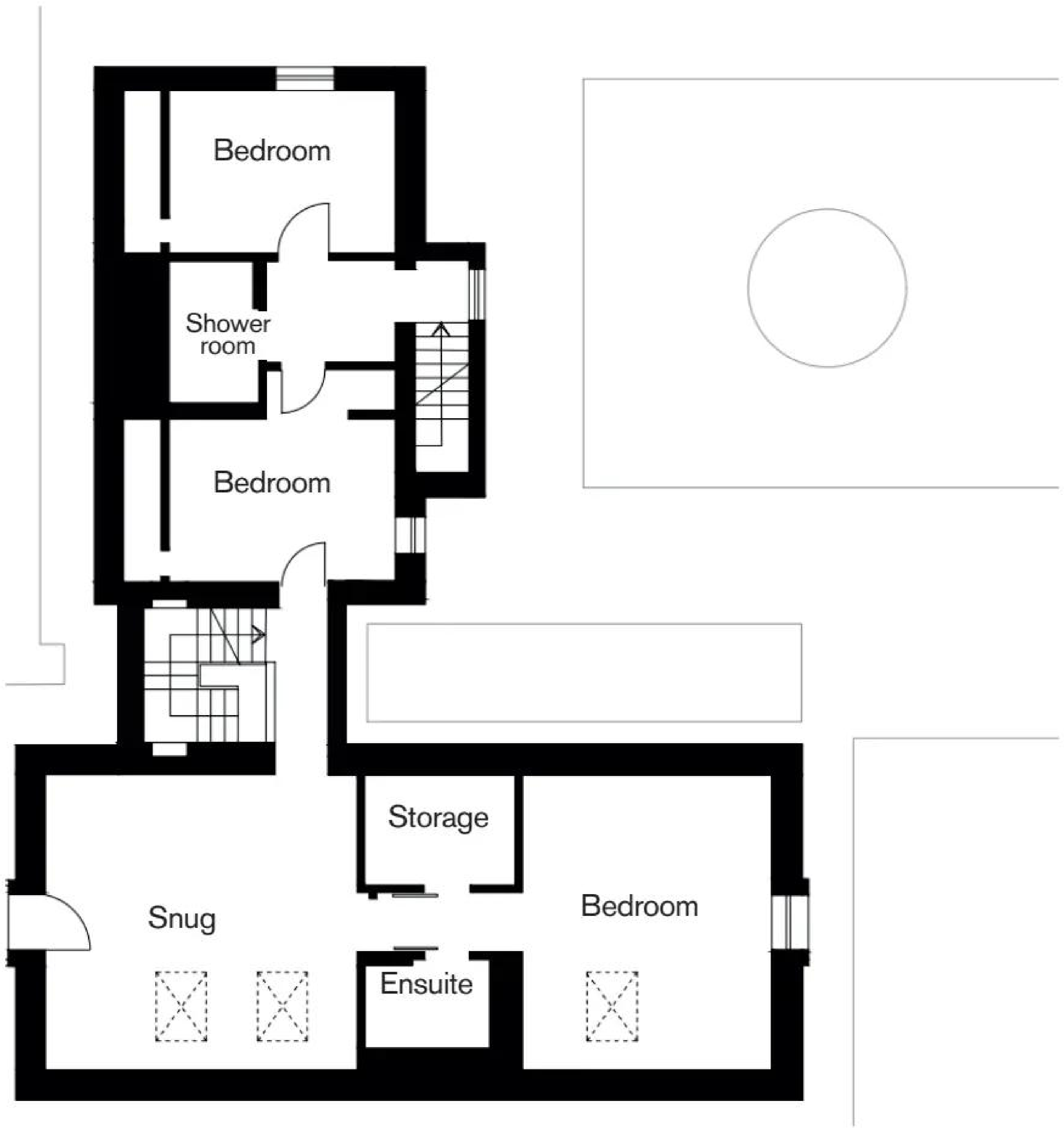
Neil and Sandra had sold their house and the whole family, including Mary, were living in two static caravans on site. "The family spent the first three months of their self build project in their caravans looking at the sprayed outline of their house until

Floor plans

Ground floor


Bathroom
Kitchen
Living
Bedroom
Cl
Bedroom
Storage
Bathroom
Utility
Lobby
Kitchen
Dining
Living

First floor


Bedroom
Shower room
Bedroom
Storage
Snug
Bedroom
Ensuite

lockdown was lifted in the summer," says Ann. The caravans were positioned on site, quite close to the building site. "We had two winters and Christmases in those caravans," says Sandra. "It was almost the third Christmas when we got in the house, due to all the stop-starts during the Covid lockdowns. In the early stages it went quickly, but at the end it seemed to take an age. Thankfully many of the materials we used had been bought in advance, so we avoided most of the pandemic-related price rises."

Dream result

Since moving in, Neil and Sandra's focus is now only on the joy of their first self build. "Ann's first design is exactly what we ended up with," says Neil. "It's light and airy downstairs, with the large windows and polished concrete floors reflecting the sunlight. In contrast, it's cosy and cocooned upstairs with the dark smoked oak floors. We get great views from every side of the house."

There's also a fun flow to the property. "Sandra described her grandparents' farmhouse, which had two staircases she enjoyed playing on as a child. So, we created the bridge access to the upper-level living area and, combined with the two staircases, it feels like all the routes don't ever finish. Like a kid, you could keep moving continuously, popping in and out of the house," says Ann.

The property is futureproofed, too. "Everything's in place if we want to install electric car charging points," says Neil. "And Ann designed a bedroom downstairs so that when we get too old to climb the stairs, we can live on the ground floor. The house was five years in the making, but we now have a very practical multi-generational home, that's easy to keep and warm."

"What we love about our finished home is the way that the building sits into the landscape," says Sandra. "When you're driving up the road to the house and the roof starts to emerge, its form and colour blends in with the heather on the hillside behind, which creates a beautiful, seamless effect."

closer look

Sustainable approach...

Around 90% of the demolition materials from the old sheds on the site were re-used and recycled. The concrete blocks and slabs of the demolished sheds were crushed and repurposed in the road construction, for instance. Corrugated metal sheets were given to a neighbouring farmer to re-use in his farm buildings, adhering to the circular economy ethos.

A fabric first approach was applied to the construction. This involved deep timber frame walls and roofs with sustainable and recyclable materials used, such as zinc, larch, and aluminium corrugated sheet cladding. Triple glazed windows throughout the house make it more energy efficient and airtight. A host of renewable technology has been installed, including ground source heat pump, MVHR system and Solar PV panels.

Fabric first design

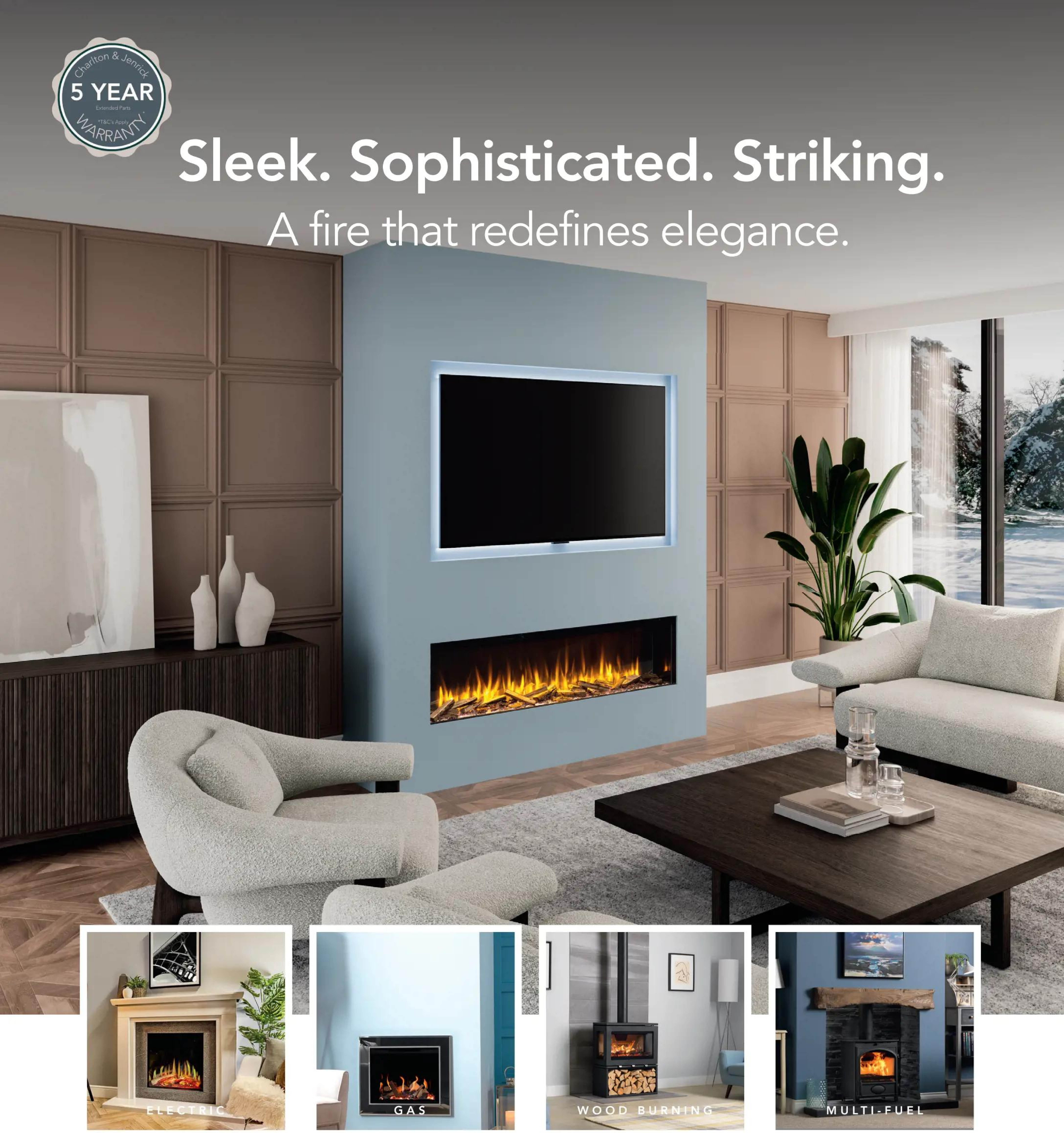
TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£283	11%	£70,000
Foundations	£154	6%	£38,000
External walls & windows	£571	22%	£141,000
Roof structure & covering	£389	15%	£96,000
Internal walls	£312	12%	£77,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£154	6%	£38,000
Plumbing & heating (incl. bathroom & kitchen)	£283	11%	£70,000
Electrics	£130	5%	£32,000
Decorating	£93	4%	£23,000
External works	£223	9%	£55,000
Grand total			**£640,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Ann Nisbet Studio** 0141 632 0351 www.annisbet.com CONTRACTOR **Pert Bruce Construction** 01674 673 883 www.pertbruce.co.uk PLANNING CONSULTANT **Bidwells** 01223 841841 www.bidwells.co.uk QUANTITY SURVEYOR **BCC** 0141 579 5900 www.bccqs.co.uk STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Peter Brett** 0118 950 0761 www.peterbrett.com CLADDING & FLOORING **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk DOORS & WINDOWS **Internorm** 020 8205 9991 www.uk.internorm.com SOLAR PV **Eco Power Innovations** 0141 297 1727 www.ecopowerinnovations.co.uk ROOF **VM Zinc** www.vmzinc.com BATHROOM TILES **Porcelanosa** 01923 656777 www.porcelanosa.com LIGHTING **Castlegate Lights** 01642 714 444 www.castlegatelights.co.uk **Astro Lighting** 01279 427001 www.astrolighting.com **Gubi** www.gubi.com **Firstlight Products** 01908 310221 www.firstlight-products.co.uk KITCHEN **Stable Kitchens** 01307 818036 www.stablekitchens.co.uk WOODBURNERS **Hwam Intelligent Heat** www.hwam.com **Salamander Stoves** 01626 363507 www.salamanderstoves.com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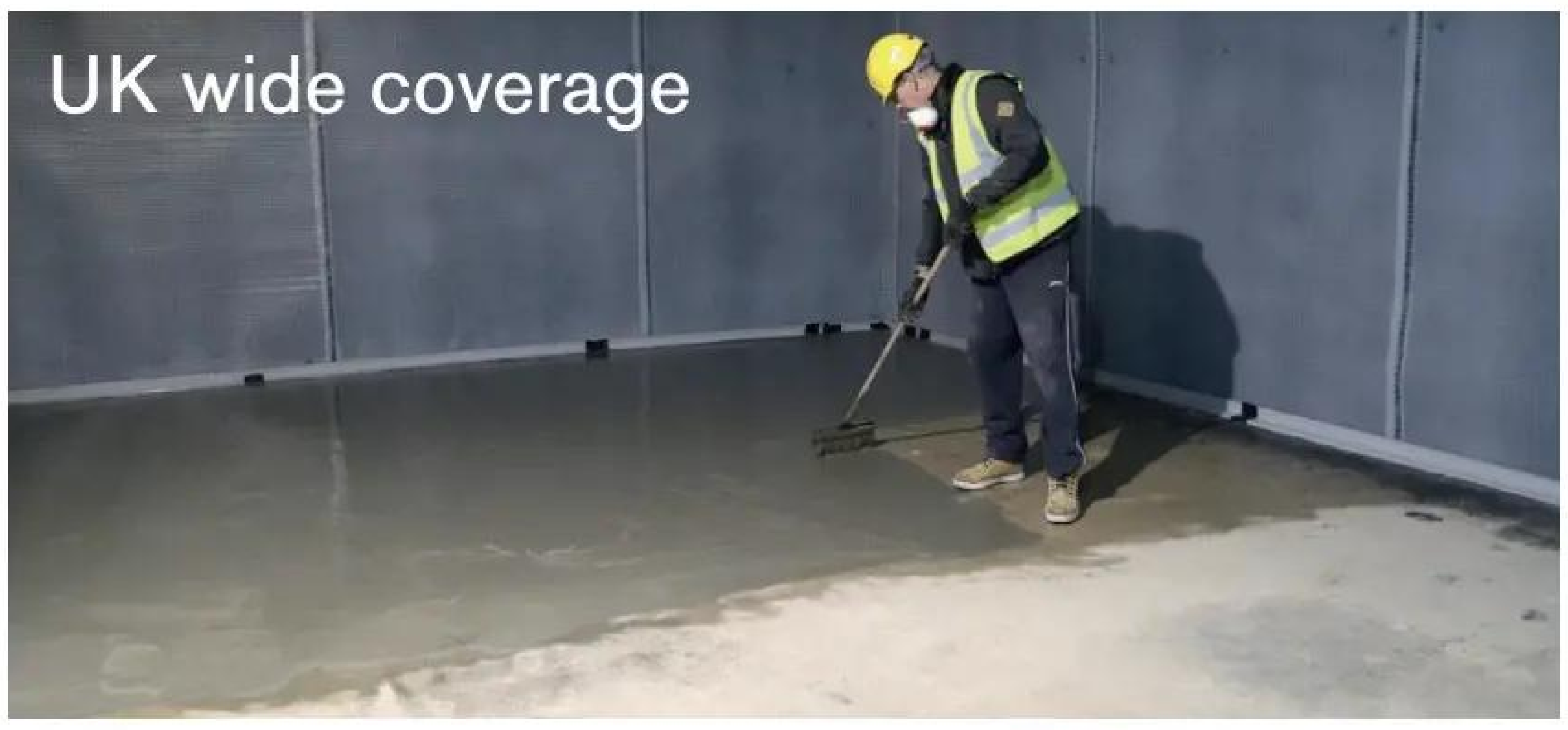

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SHOW OF UNITY

Matt and Emily Lightbody's practical, balanced retrofit to a 1970s house adds space and improves energy efficiency

WORDS **EMILY BROOKS** PHOTOS **BRUCE HEMMING**

This contemporary-looking home in Kent couldn't be more different from the boxy 1970s brick house next door. Which is amazing when you learn that it used to be more or less exactly the same. The property's transformation, with a side extension built over the original garage and rendered finish, is more than just skin deep, though: driven by Matt and Emily Lightbody's desire to live more sustainably, it's also a brilliant case study for retrofitting in a pragmatic way.

The couple bought the house in late 2016, moving from a nearby new build in search of a place for their growing family. "We wanted somewhere with more space and a bigger garden, that had potential," says Matt. They did some modernisation work before even moving in, mainly centred around knocking through to create a big open-plan kitchen-diner across the back of the house, at a total cost of £62,000. In 2022, with their finances in a more comfortable place, and feeling like they and their (now older) children (who are currently nine and six) could handle the disruption, they felt ready to tackle the extension and wider renovation.

Phase two

The builder on the original project, Chris Jeggo, was a friend, and worked with architect Andy Lanham to bring the project to fruition. So, when it was time to undertake the next phase of works, Matt and Emily saw no reason to look elsewhere. The neighbours to one side of them had already completed something along the lines of what they wanted, with a side extension wrapped in white render with anthracite glazing: "It helped us see what we could do, and that from a planning point of view there wouldn't be too many constraints," says Matt. Accordingly, getting planning permission for their own project proved to be no problem.

Matt and Emily replaced the side garage with a two-storey extension, giving them a new master suite upstairs and a snug, WC and utility room on the ground floor

Chris and Andy work together under the name Colston Homes, and Matt says that it worked brilliantly to hire architect and main contractor as a package. "If you have an architect and builder that

FACT FILE

NAMES Matt & Emily Lightbody

OCCUPATIONS Managing director/commercial director of a drainage company & teacher

LOCATION Kent

TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation & extension

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame for the extension; the original house is brick & block

PROJECT ROUTE Package of architect, builder & project management working for a single company

PLOT SIZE 319m²

HOUSE COST £455,500

BOUGHT 2016

HOUSE SIZE 144m²

PROJECT COST £265,321 (plus £62,000 in 2016)

PROJECT COST PER M² £1,843

TOTAL COST £782,821

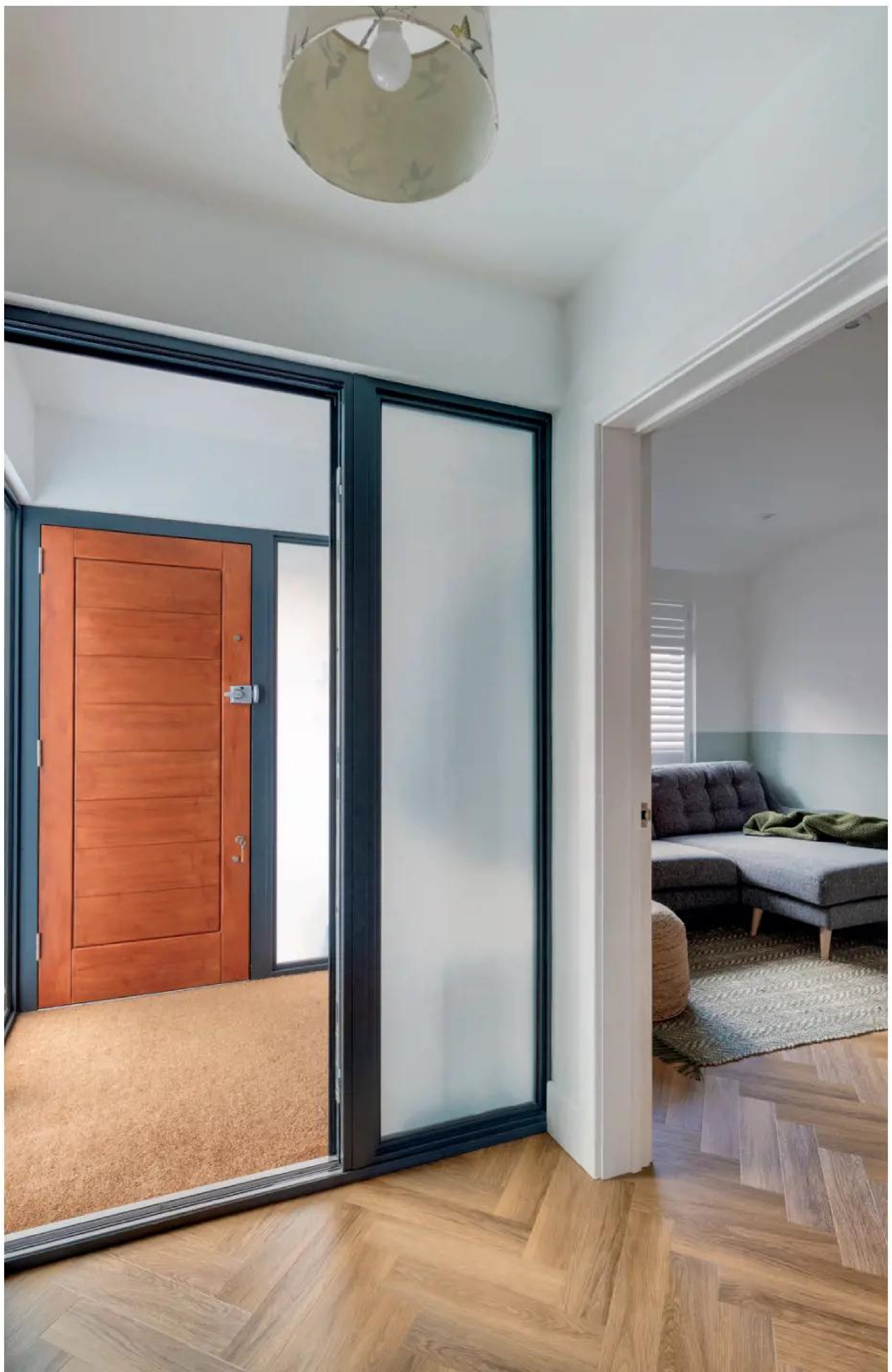
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED July 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK 24 weeks

CURRENT VALUE £900,000

Above: The Wickes kitchen was installed as part of the original 2016 renovation works to the house. The old white PVCu windows have been replaced by anthracite aluminium units, to match the new glazing at the front (the old windows were sold rather than thrown away, so they have been reused)

Right: A generous entrance vestibule has plenty of room for coats and shoes, with edge-to-edge coir doormat. The extra door into the hallway keeps the warmth in and the cold out. The house used to step straight into the living room, but a new dividing wall creates a proper hallway



"We wanted somewhere that had potential"

aren't communicating well, it brings challenges," says Matt. "Chris and Andy spoke every day, and felt that Andy would only ever put forward something that worked aesthetically and practically, and was buildable." And, in terms of subcontractors, "I knew they would only work with people who shared their values and were interested in getting the detail right."

A £155,000 additional mortgage on the house was taken out to pay for the work, but in the end it wasn't quite enough, with the couple having to borrow an extra £50,000 to take it to completion and get the high spec finish they wanted, like their smart resin-bound driveway. "You get to a point where you don't want to compromise; we chose what we wanted, even if it ended up costing more," says Matt. At a time when interest rates were jumping sharply, he is pleased that he managed to borrow the bulk of the money at a reasonable rate.

Right: As part of the new work, the kitchen was made smaller – the couple realised they'd made a mistake by having the breakfast bar come too far into the room, giving less space to the dining area, so a piece of the worktop was cut out and the peninsula shunted closer to the rest of the kitchen. It means there's now room for a sofa for hanging out, too

Sustainable vision

Initially, the idea was to go all-electric with an air source heat pump – and give up fossil fuels altogether. "I've become more and more interested in sustainability, and this seemed like an opportunity to do our bit and make sure we can live a life where our personal carbon footprint isn't very high," says Matt. However, Andy suggested that this wasn't a cost-effective solution given that the boiler was still pretty new. "I said, don't chuck away the infrastructure you've already paid for in order to pay thousands more for a heat pump," says Andy. "What we should be doing is trying to reduce the need for energy in the first place, so that the gas boiler will hardly ever need to be on." Now wrapped in expanded polystyrene external insulation with render on top, with new double-glazed windows, the house is fulfilling that promise.

The new addition to the side completely replaces the garage, rather than building on top, with new foundations. The footprint is slightly larger than before, with an extension to the front on the garage side, too; this has allowed enough room for a generous

WE LEARNED...

CHOOSE AN ARCHITECT and builder that work in partnership. Ours considered issues early and resolved them together.

PLAN EARLY when sourcing systems that are not commonly used in home improvement projects. Designing, estimating and installing an MVHR system for our house was a challenge.

BE PESSIMISTIC WITH YOUR COSTINGS; things will end up being more expensive than you think. In hindsight we should have borrowed more money when the interest rates were low.

DON'T COMPROMISE on quality. Do the project in phases if you need to. We actually got more of a sense of fulfilment doing up our house over multiple projects across a few years.

entrance hall (sandwiched by two doors, to keep out the cold) as well as a run of new rooms – from front to back, a snug, WC and utility room, the latter connected to the kitchen. Upstairs, the extension houses a new master bedroom suite: you walk in via the dressing room, with the bedroom off to the left and a shower room to the right. It's a relatively narrow space, and the choice of timber frame for the extension was partly to retain as much internal floor space as possible – a cavity wall would have gobbled up a few incredibly precious centimetres. Where the old external wall has now became an internal wall, the second skin has been removed, again to maximise liveable floor area.

In terms of the new energy setup, there is an 18kW solar PV array that feeds into battery storage. The roof pitches both east and west, so the panels are on both sides – front and back. In the extension, the new rooms are so highly insulated that there was no need to extend

A compact WC sits between the snug and utility room, with a high-level opaque window that respects the privacy of both its users and the next door neighbours

Left & far left: New flooring, windows, shutters and decoration in the main living room have refreshed this space as part of the wider renovation

Below: One of the biggest advantages of the new layout is that the couple's sons now get their own bedrooms, with the fourth bedroom used as Matt's home office

Bottom: The new ensuite gives Emily and Matt a grown-up bathroom of their own. An elongated shower tray makes the showering area as generous as possible, while a wall-mounted vanity gives the illusion of more space, too

the gas-fired central heating: they just have electric underfloor heating on the ground floor, with a small electric radiator in the master bedroom and an electric towel rail in the ensuite.

Airtightness with ventilation

Upgrading the insulation would go a long way to fulfilling the couple's goal of minimising reliance on the gas boiler – but as the house got more tightly sealed, so a new challenge emerged. The increased airtightness was very likely to result in poor indoor air quality and a build-up of moisture inside. Andy proposed a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR) system to solve the problem. Although relatively easy to install on a new build, retrofitting MVHR requires some clever thinking about where to put the ducts and vents. "Extracting the hot, damp air is easier, because most of it's on the top floor, from the bathrooms, plus there's one riser from the kitchen; that all goes to a heat exchanger in the roof," explains Andy. Warmth from the extracted air is then channeled into a pre-warmed incoming supply of fresh air. Getting the ducts from the loft level to the ground floor is where it gets a little tricky: while, for example, it makes sense to put a duct in a first-floor wardrobe where it's not really seen, that wardrobe might be sitting on top of an internal wall, or a floor joist.

"The installer we found for the MVHR was a commercial contractor, and they were a bit difficult to deal with," says Matt. "They were a growing business with a lot of work on, and we were a small project to them. They knew what they were doing, which was great, but they were used to working with multiple trades on site who would do the prep work for them. Suddenly these variations for the builder were popping up that hadn't been initially quoted for, like creating an OSB framework in the loft to screw in the MVHR. Because I wasn't experienced enough in that area, I didn't know I

DON'T GROW UP
OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO

A space-saving pocket door divides the master bedroom from the dressing room. The zone is heated by an electric radiator

needed to take these things into account." Getting the timing right was also crucial – making sure the ductwork was installed in the new extension before those areas could be closed off or boxed in, so that the next phase of the build could progress.

Living amongst the build

The family stayed in the house throughout. "It might not be okay for some people, but it was fine for us, although Emily found it more stressful than me. The boys actually liked living on a building site," says Matt. "Although there was one point in November where we just had ply where the porch used to be, and there was a cold spell. There was no point putting the heating on; we just wore more coats."

The solar PV, in conjunction with the battery storage and insulation, is now paying dividends in terms of household bills. "In summer we were producing 30-40 kWh per day, which is more than enough to charge Emily's electric car, and most of mine," says Matt.

closer look

External insulation…

Thermally efficient home

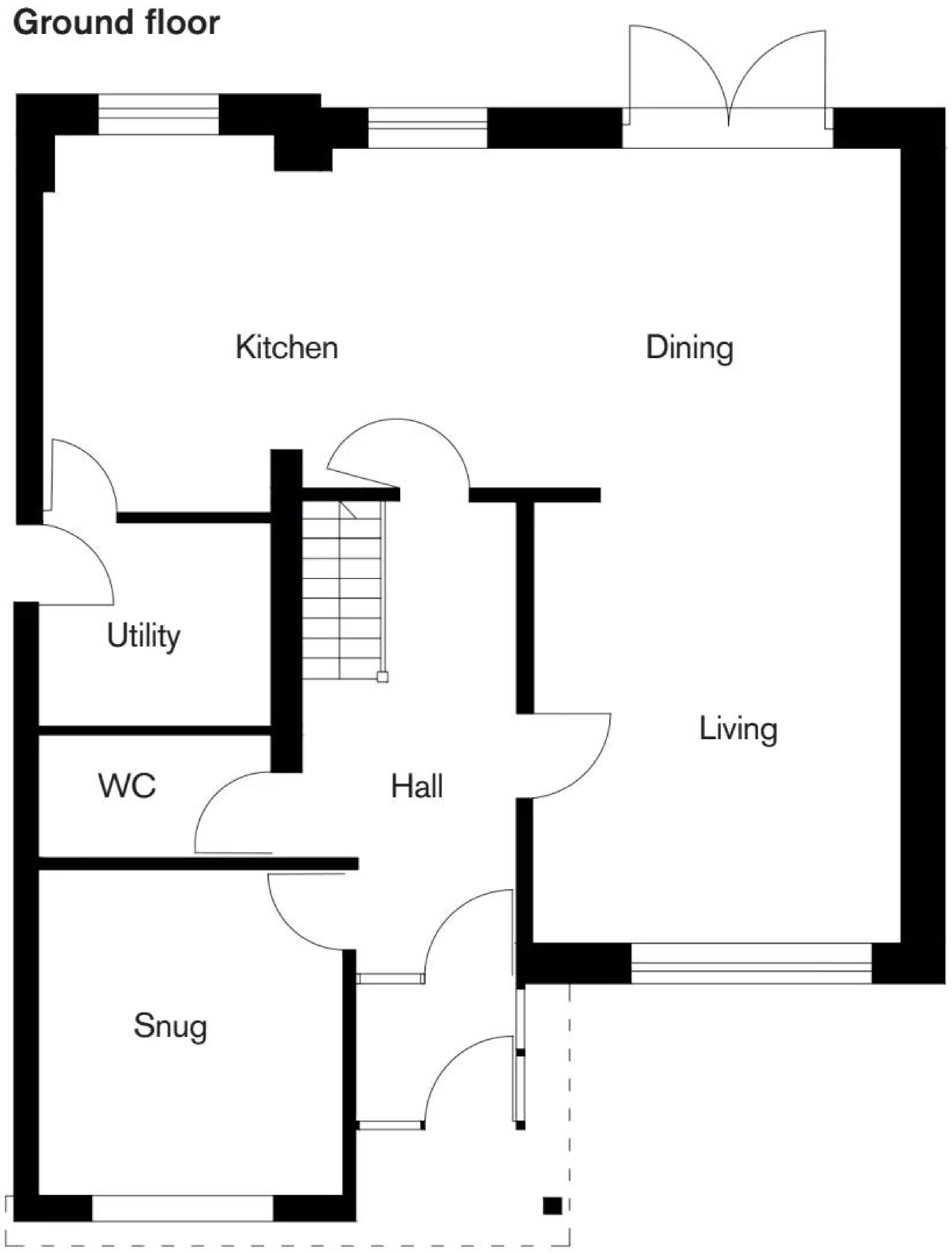
Wrapping the exterior of Matt and Emily's home in insulation was key to improving its thermal performance. The house uses Baumit's EPS (expanded polystyrene) insulation, a rigid board that is waterproof, withstands temperature extremes and can reduce noise. In order to be effective, there needed to be a continuous skin of insulation, with 120mm used on the original cavity brickwork (giving a U-value of 0.18 W/m²k). Slightly thicker boards were needed where the old tiled wall panels were, to give a flush finish. The timber frame extension has 100mm external insulation, with less needed here because there is an additional 100mm of Celotex PIR board between the studwork. Knauf Aquapanel cement board is used as sheathing to the outside of the timber frame, with the insulation fitted directly on top. The whole house was finished with Baumit silicon render, resulting in a home that's not only thermally efficient and airtight, but seamlessly unifies the old and new structures from a visual perspective, too.

"Now, we've realised we can export the excess, selling to Octopus at 15p per kwh, and charge the cars at night when it's only 7p per kWh. I don't pay for electricity for eight or nine months of the year. And the gas is not really an expense at all any more."

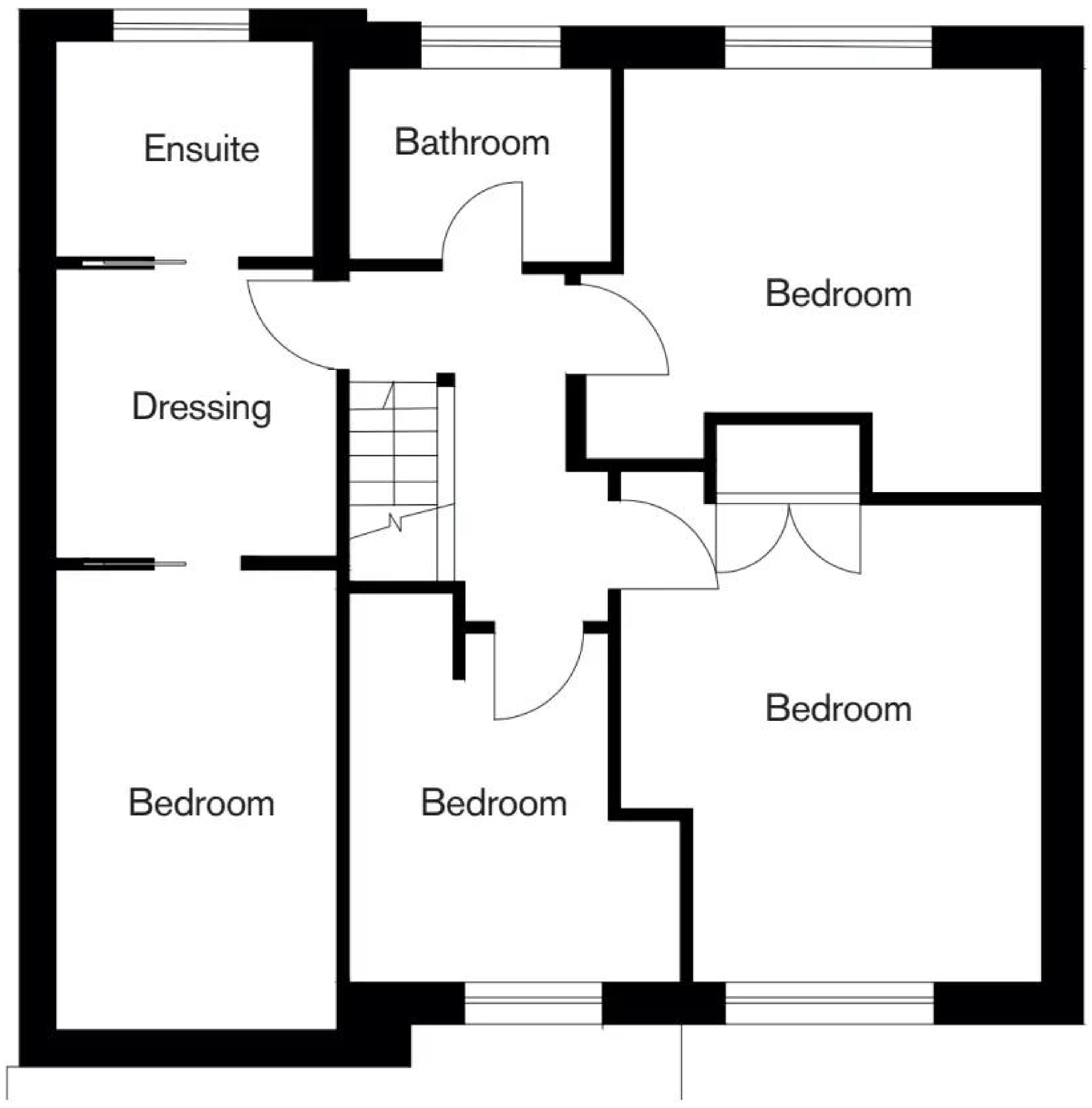
When you're retrofitting an existing property with energy performance in mind, it might initially seem like a good idea to rip everything out and start again. Life is much more nuanced than that, though. Homeowners must balance what's theoretically achievable with reality: the available budget, the level of disruption they're prepared to put up with, and the materials they could potentially save by not diverting them to landfill. Matt and Emily's finished house is the result of a lot of sensible thinking, achieving still-brilliant results with a slightly lighter touch.

Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Professional fees	£48	3%	£6,850
Preliminaries	£52	3%	£7,452
Garage demolition	£92	5%	£13,228
Foundations & drains	£108	6%	£15,591
Weathertight house shell; external& internal walls & joists	£130	7%	£18,672
Roof structure, covering & rainwater goods	£255	14%	£36,782
Aquapanel boarding prior to rendering	£20	1%	£2,850
External wall insulation & render	£135	7%	£19,500
Windows & external doors	£159	9%	£22,897
Internal floor joists & deck and internal alterations	£104	6%	£15,012
Heating, plumbing & ventilation	£61	3%	£8,789
Solar PV	£90	5%	£13,000
Electrics	£46	2%	£6,619
Joinery & fittings	£95	5%	£13,664
Kitchen & bathrooms	£95	5%	£13,724
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£118	6%	£16,985
Decorating	£17	1%	£2,500
Resin bound driveway	£137	7%	£19,680
Building Regs application	£6	<1%	£930
Management & overheads	£74	4%	£10,596
Grand total			**£265,321**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT & MAIN CONTRACTOR **Colston Homes** www.colstonhomes.co.uk STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Paul Molineaux Associates** www.paulmolineux.co.uk EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION & RENDER **Baumit** 01622 710763 www.baumit.co.uk TIMBER FRAME & BATHROOM **Jewson** www.jewson.co.uk GLAZING **Stenfenster** 01522 512525 www.sternfenster.com INTERNAL DOORS **Howdens** 01604 876000 www.howdens.com KITCHEN **Wickes** 0330 123 4123 www.wickes.co.uk AMTICO FLOORING **Aztec Carpets & Flooring** 01892 541899 www.azcarpetsandflooring.co.uk INSULATION & RAINWATER GOODS **Covers** 0800 210 0458 coversmerchants.co.uk SOLAR PV **Enlightened Solar** www.enlightenedsolar.co.uk MVHR SYSTEM **Vent-Axia** 0344 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com WALL FINISHES **Brewers** www.brewers.co.uk

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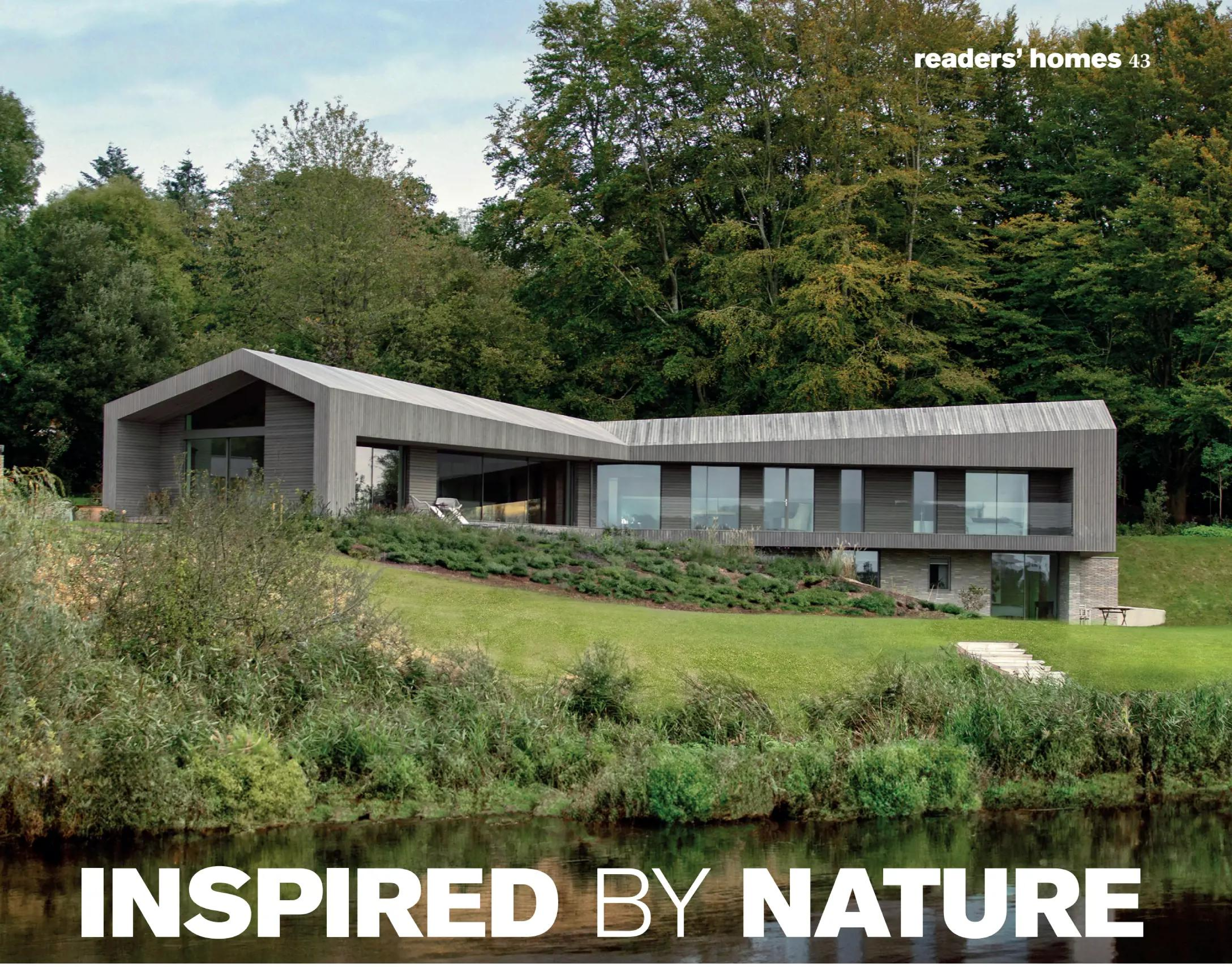


INSPIRED BY NATURE

Stunning natural surroundings and far-reaching views gave rise to the design of **Esther Horwood's** new home – a striking modern abode nestled on the bank of the River Avon

WORDS **REBECCA FOSTER** PHOTOS **MARTIN GARDNER**

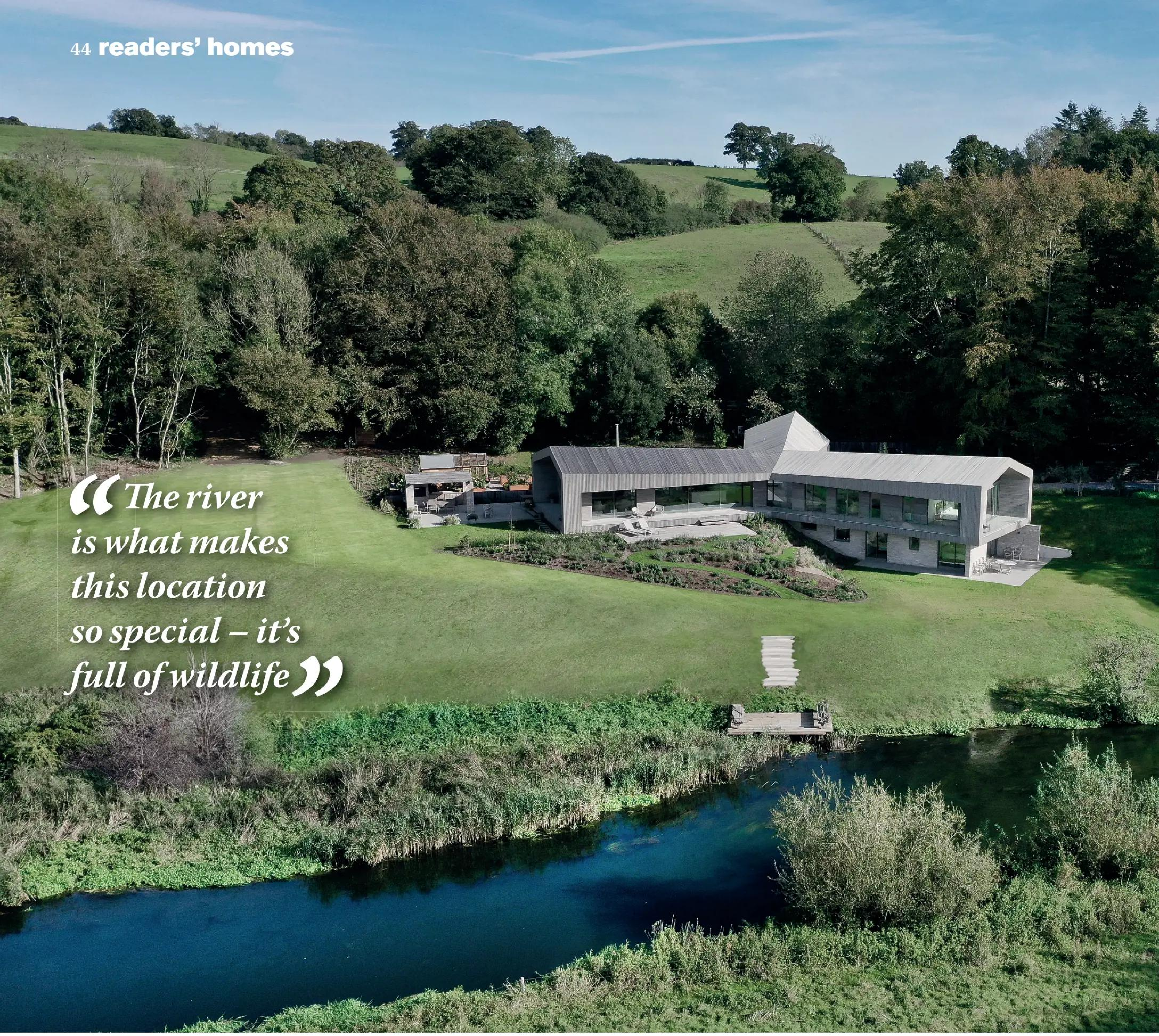
Perched on a sloping site on the bank of the River Avon, it's fair to say that Esther Horwood's sleek new home truly makes the most of its picturesque location. The design evolved out of the plot's elevated position overlooking the water, with distant views of Salisbury Cathedral spire adding to the inspirational feel as soon as you step inside the property.

The Horwood family had lived in the area for almost two decades when they purchased the site where the new house stands. "We lived next door. At that point, there was a little cottage on this plot that the owners used as a weekend home," says Esther. Though the brick-built property was a little rundown, it benefitted from unbeatable views thanks to its elevated position on the river bank. When Esther and her husband Chris bought the cottage in 2015, their goal was to

FACT FILE

NAME Esther Horwood
OCCUPATION Retired
LOCATION Wiltshire
TYPE OF PROJECT Self build
STYLE Contemporary
PROJECT ROUTE Architect designed & project managed, main contractor appointed for construction
CONSTRUCTION METHOD Concrete retaining structure on lower ground floor, with masonry and concrete slab above. Steel frame with timber infill on ground floor
PROPERTY COST £1,000,000
BOUGHT 2015
HOUSE SIZE 295m²
PROJECT COST £1,764,909
PROJECT COST PER M² £5,983
TOTAL COST £2,764,909
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED June 2021
BUILDING WORK TOOK 78 weeks
MOVED IN December 2022

Above: The external materials palette features treated larch cladding, long format bricks and powder coated aluminium frame windows, finished in a RAL colour that blends with the rest of the property



> *"The river is what makes this location so special – it's full of wildlife"*

build a small new home that'd provide a good base for retirement, while having space for visiting family to stay over. "As well as the main cottage there was a summer house with two bedrooms, a bathroom and a kitchen – and it was on the best bit of the plot in terms of the view," she says. "We wanted to replace that and keep the cottage as ancillary accommodation for when our kids came to stay."

However, when the local planning department stipulated that the plot could only host a single dwelling, Esther and Chris put their plans on ice for a few years. "Eventually, we decided to crack on and build one larger, modern new home," says Esther.

Scenic surroundings

In early 2019, the Horwoods began their search for an architect to take the project forward. "We knew we wanted to do something contemporary that'd make the most of the views, as you can see Salisbury Cathedral from the plot as well as having the river right there," says Esther. After meeting several local design practices, it was Winchester-based AR Design Studio that came out on top. "Andy Ramus did a few sketches for us where the broad shape of the house was the same, but with three different rooflines," says Esther. "We chose the one that was completely asymmetrical. It

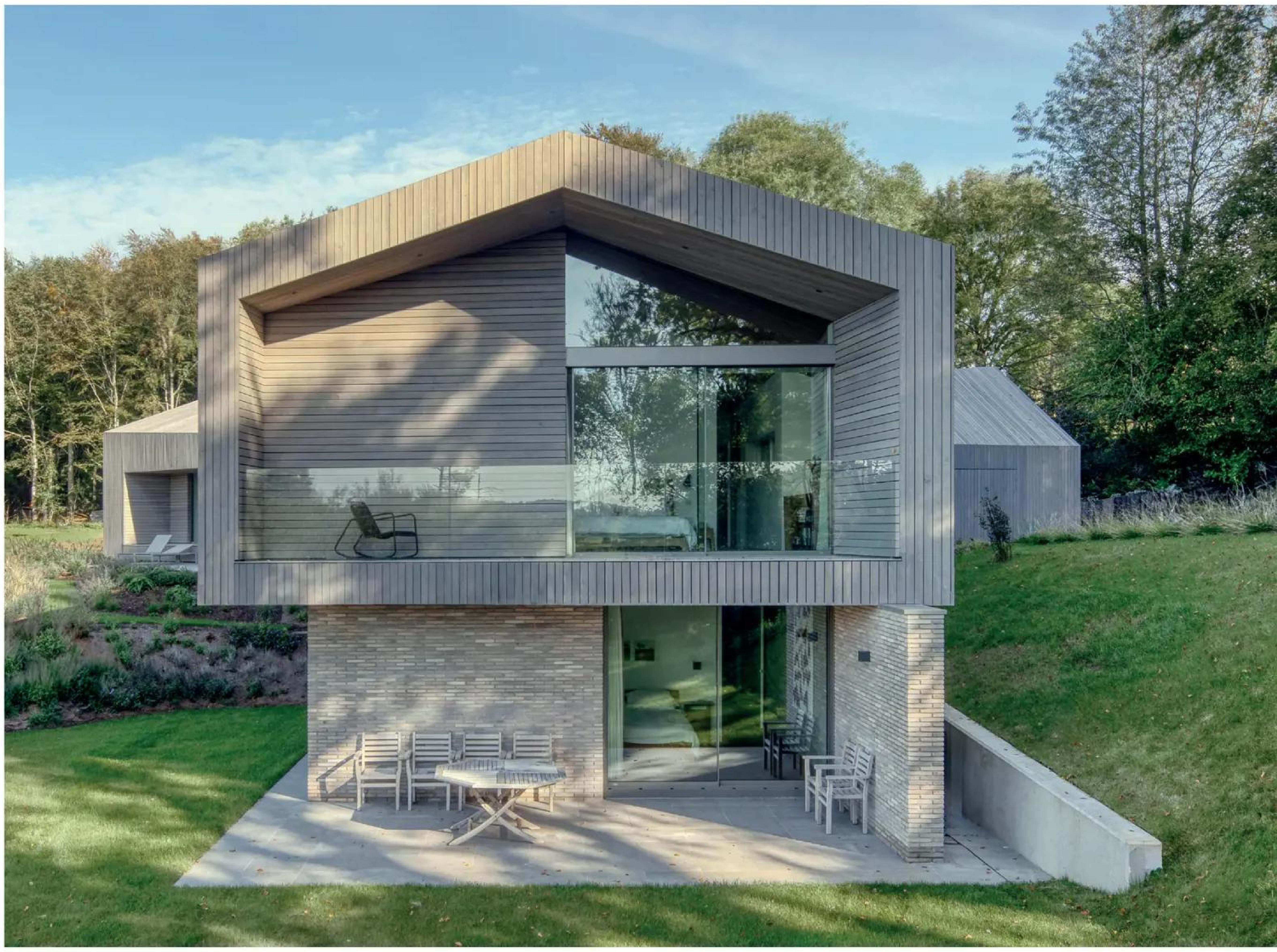
I LEARNED...

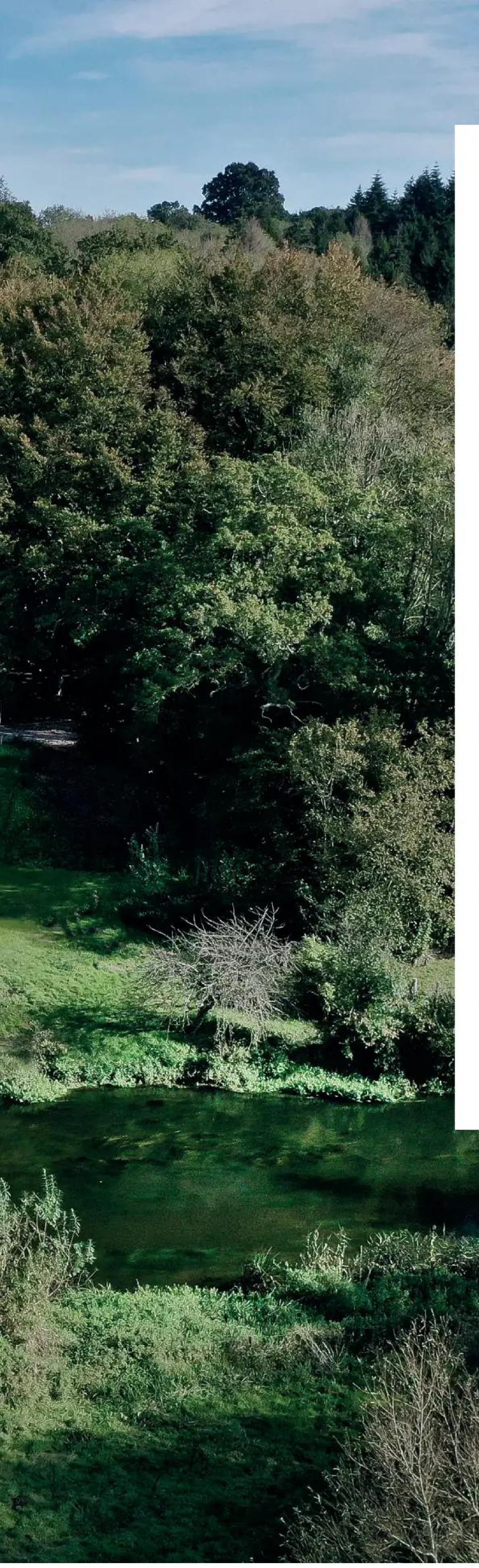
ALLOCATE PLENTY OF TIME AND MONEY to the planning phase. In our case, Covid intervened, which didn't help matters. We're also on a site of special scientific interest (SSSI). The river is protected, so we ended up having to throw quite a lot of money at the planning side of things and getting all the right surveys done.

TALKING TO ALL THE NEIGHBOURS helped pave the way for a smoother process. I personally went round and spoke to everyone and was in touch with the parish council. We ended up getting a lot of letters in support of the scheme.

ASK YOUR ARCHITECT to incorporate storage space into the design. We have big cupboards behind the door as you walk into the main bedroom, plus the hidden cupboard as you move through into the kitchen. You need space for bulky things like suitcases!

IF I WAS TO DO THE PROJECT AGAIN, I wouldn't have installed floor lights as they shine up into my face – but they're cut into the timber and porcelain tiles, so they're here to stay. It's tricky, because until the house is finished and you actually turn the lights on, you don't know whether you'll like them.





Above: The structure of the house incorporates various overhangs, which provide the perfect sheltered space for Esther to enjoy the views – even on chilly winter days

Left: The house is formed of two wings and a tail, mirroring the body shape of the Red Kite birds that often circle overhead

was clear Andy just 'got' the site, and when he sketched the design it made sense straight away – we didn't mess around with it."

For architect Andy, founder and director at AR Design Studio, the spark of inspiration for any design concept most often arises from that first impression of the site itself. "You only get one moment and you've really got to know what's striking about it," he says. "It's important to be observant and record everything. The river is what makes this location so special – it's full of wildlife, with swans and ducks in the water and Red Kites circling overhead."

With a basic rectangular footprint as a starting point, the team at AR Design Studio began to reflect on what shape the house should be if it was going to make the most of the surrounding views. "When you're dealing with rivers, looking across them isn't very interesting – but looking up and down them is much better, as you get a longer view and see more of the water," says Andy.

With this in mind, the design team broke the initial rectangular shape in two, twisting each section to create two wings looking both up and down the river. The house would comprise two storeys nestled into the sloping plot, with a floating timber-clad storey at ground level and a brick-finished storey beneath. With two wings and a 'tail' containing the garage and utility spaces, the outline of the footprint cleverly resembles the Red Kites soaring majestically overhead.

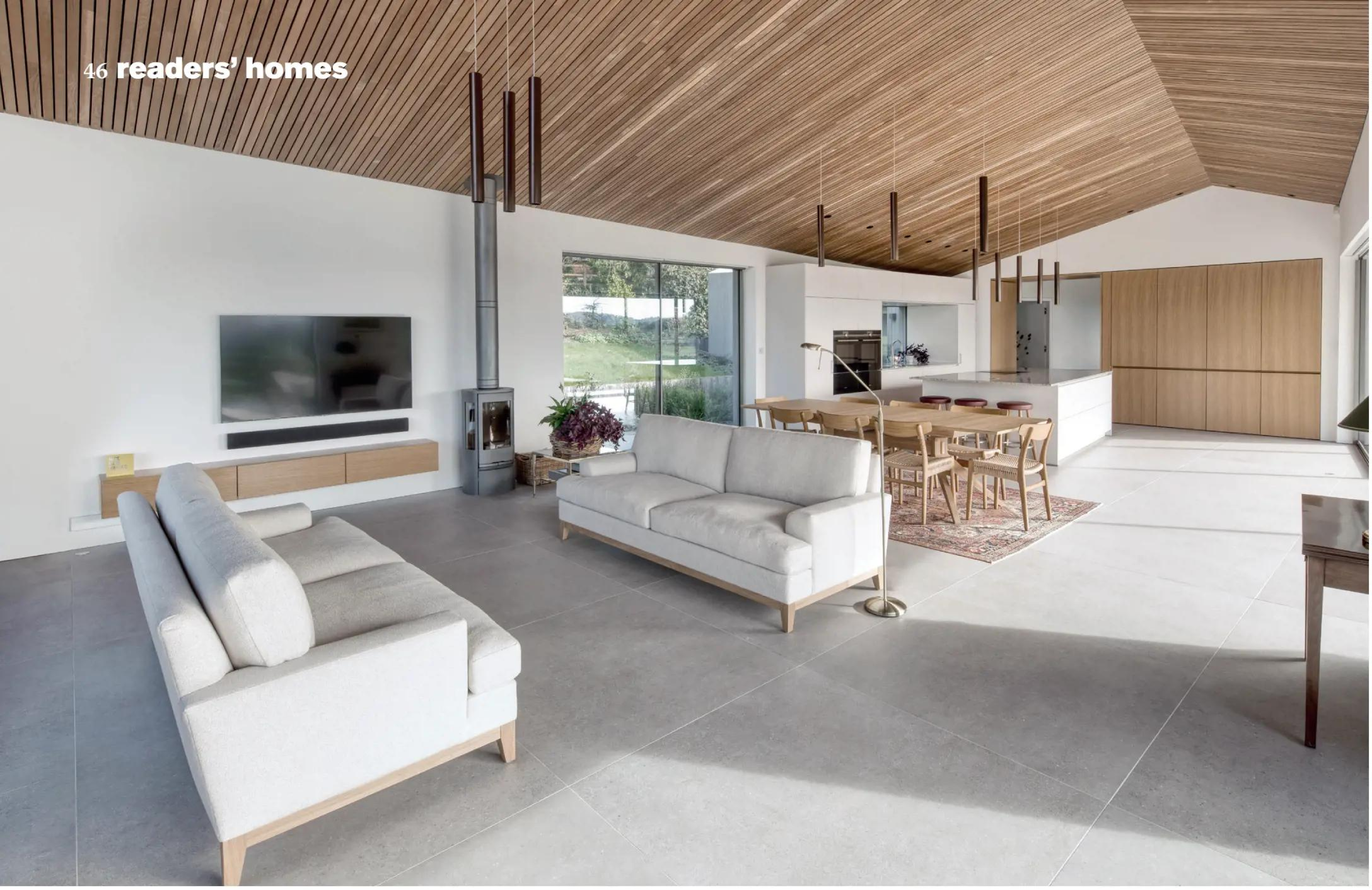
In summer 2019, however, initial pre-application feedback from the local planning department was that the proposed design for the house was too large. "We took additional advice from a planning consultant and AR Design Studio advised us to get a landscape architect involved, too," says Esther, who found the planning phase to be the most challenging part of the entire project. "We got tree surveys, bat surveys – everything. We didn't put in our full application until April 2020 and eventually got approval in July that year." Most of the planners' concerns were regarding the size of the house. "We had a bit of a battle and in the end we compromised," says Andy. "I think we made the house somewhere between 10% and 20% smaller to get it through."

Managing the build

Esther took the lead when it came to tracking down a good main contractor to build the house, which features a concrete retaining structure on the lower ground floor, with a masonry and concrete slab above. The upper storey comprises a steel frame superstructure with timber infill and a wood cladding finish.

"I did a lot of research on builders. We ultimately went with Matrod Frampton because they'd completed plenty of modern houses," says Esther, who was keen to ensure the firm were up to the task of realising the crisp, contemporary home she wanted. "The construction techniques for the house we envisioned are quite different to what you'd require for a period property."

With the assistance of a quantity surveyor, the Horwoods were able to get the tender package to a level they were happy with before breaking ground. To fund the project, they used savings and took



out a small mortgage against their existing home. "From a financial perspective, a challenge was anxiety about selling the original house," says Esther. "The market was hot for rural homes during lockdown, but then it fell away, so that was concerning at the time."

When Chris sadly passed away during the process, having the support of the team at AR Design Studio was invaluable. "One of Andy's team managed the build for us – she understood the issues that came up from the builder's perspective, but ultimately, she was batting for us," says Esther. "Given Chris's illness and death, that was brilliant – I wouldn't have coped without it."

Progressing the works

After the site was cleared, the main construction phase began in summer 2021. Having carried out extensive soil surveys, the team didn't encounter any nasty surprises when it came to laying the foundations and this part of the project proceeded smoothly. One find did slow things down, however. "When we were demolishing the old house, it was frustrating having to take the roof tiles off one by one because a survey had turned up one dead bat," says Esther.

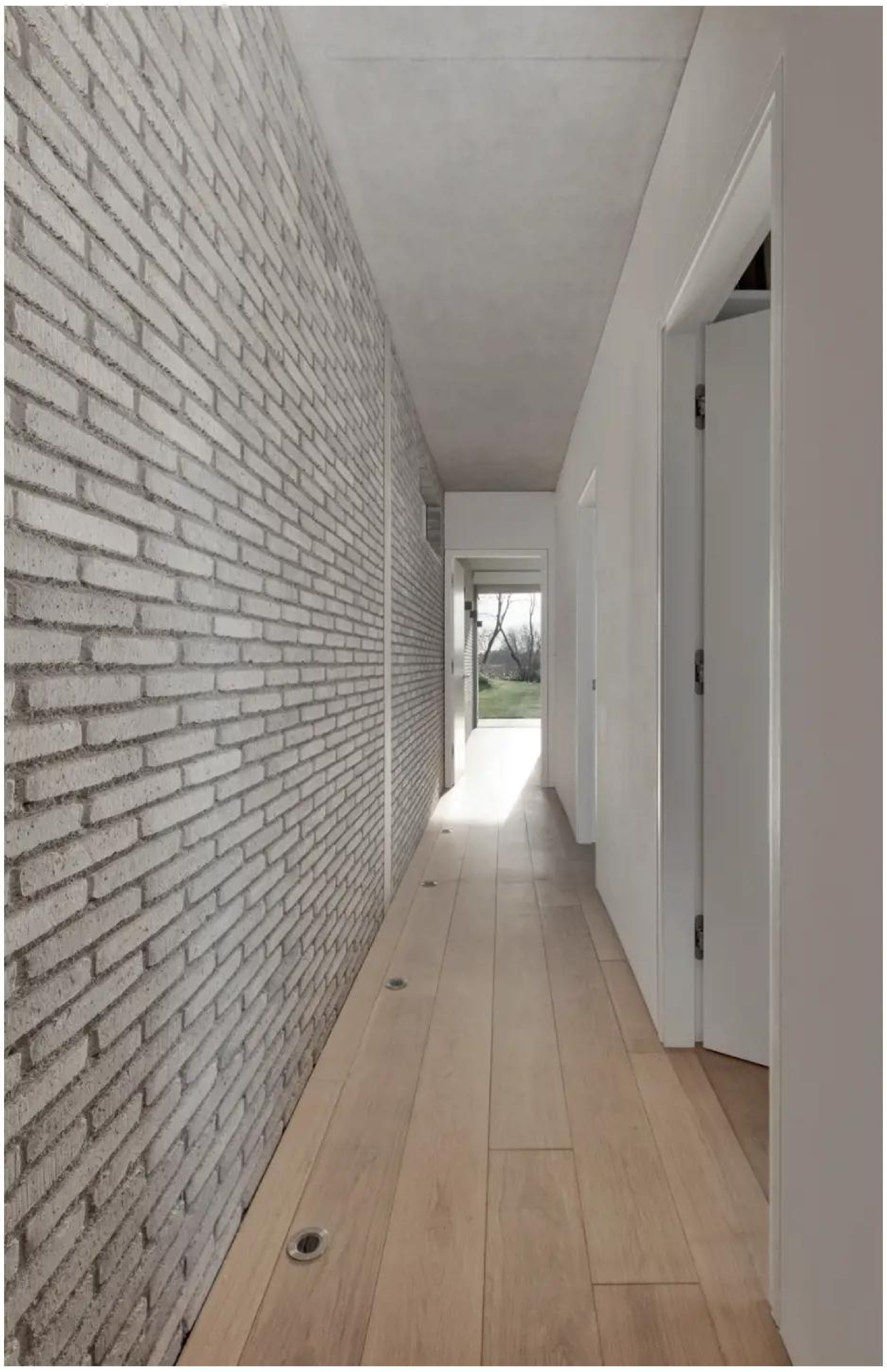
Fitting the cladding on the upper level of the house took the team longer than expected thanks to the sharp level of detail that was required. However, the sleek aesthetic of the completed property speaks for itself – the boards have been laid with a small but precise gap in between, resulting in a crisp, modern finish. "The team at AR were very careful that things were built exactly as designed, plus the builders had extremely high standards," says Esther.

For Esther, one of the highlights of the project was observing the superb quality of workmanship shown by the sub-contractors who kitted out the interiors. "Everything inside is asymmetric, and the tilers were working with huge 1.6m^2 porcelain tiles, running them from inside to outside," she says. "The finish is amazing."

She was also particularly impressed with the team that completed the slatted timber ceiling inside the house. "It took them a long time

Left: The subtle trapezoid shape of the kitchen island is angled to mirror the asymmetric proportions of the room itself. The kitchen suite is from Harwoods Kitchens

Below: On the lower level of the property, long format bricks from Vande Moortel provide a textured wall finish



to do because everything is asymmetric – especially the area above the staircase," says Esther. "The quality with which those two aspects were finished was a real pleasure to watch. Plus, the architect and the builders were a delight to work with."

Light-filled haven

Upon stepping into the finished house, visitors are greeted with an immediate view of Salisbury Cathedral through a vast picture window above the staircase. To the right, a deep wooden reveal leads to the sun-soaked kitchen-living-dining space – Esther's favourite

Right: Dual aspect views and expansive ceiling heights imbue the property's master bedroom with spacious wow factor

Below: All the internal timber details are crafted from oak, including the sleek open tread staircase

area in the home. "That big room is fantastic," she says. "I go in there in the morning, make my cup of tea and I'm happy."

To the left of the main entrance is a corridor leading to the study and master bedroom, which has its own ensuite bathroom and dressing room. The bedroom itself benefits from dual aspect views of the river, with minimal framing and broad swathes of glass to create maximum visual impact. "We went for very slender glazing with 22mm mullions, which are almost invisible when you look at them," says Andy. "You pay a lot of money for that specification, but in return you get incredible views, natural light and moving panels of glass that provide ventilation. That connection with nature plays a powerful part in establishing a sense of wellbeing."

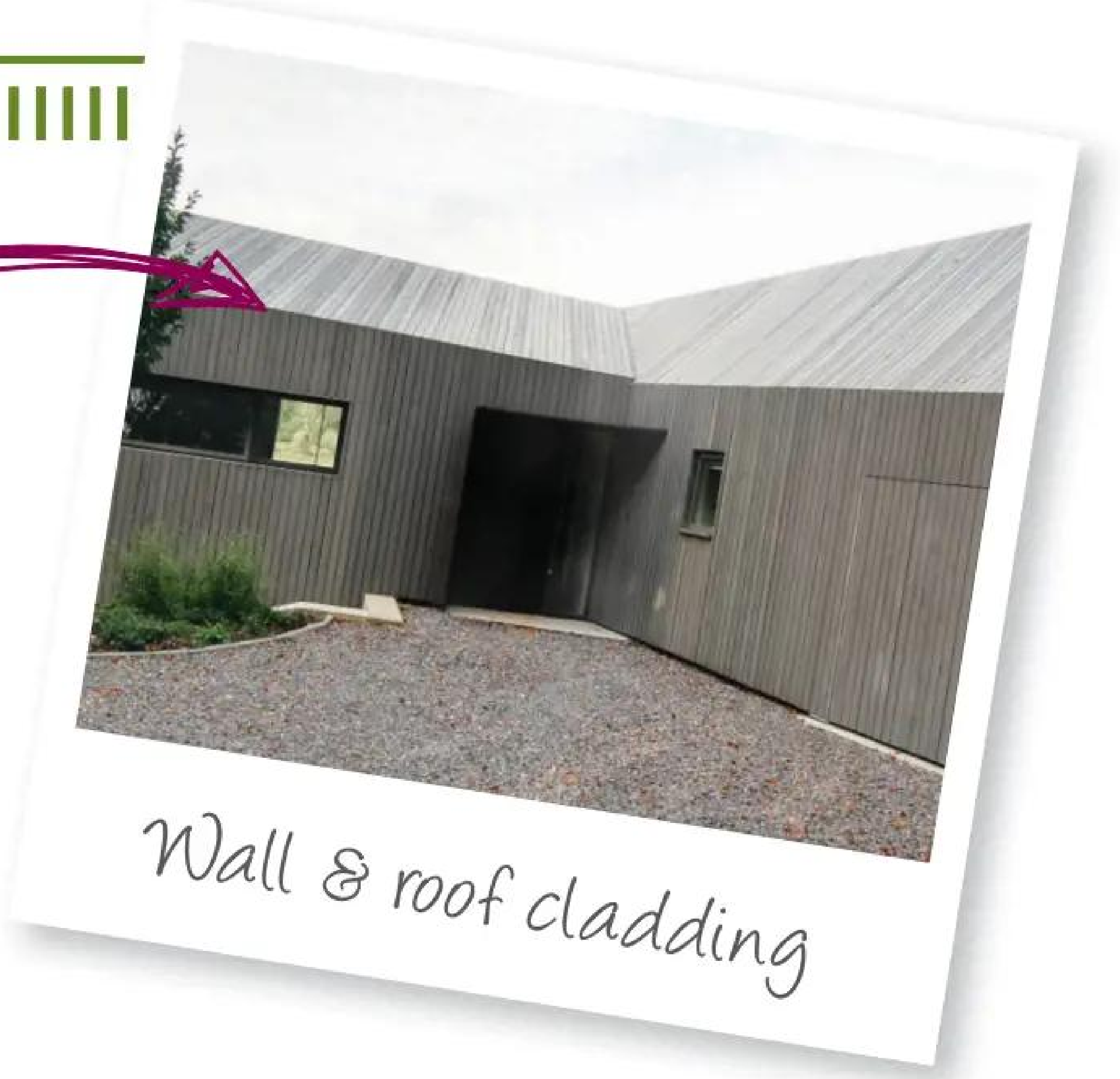
On the lower ground floor of the property there are three guest bedrooms and a family bathroom. There's also a plant room that houses the tech setup for the air source heat pump, which powers the underfloor heating system that's laid throughout the building. "The house is incredibly well insulated and is double glazed throughout, so it doesn't use that much energy," says Esther. "I also opted to install a rainwater harvesting system."

Despite the challenges she faced along her self build journey, Esther is delighted that the finished house realises the vision she and Chris had for the property when they began the design process. "It meets the exact brief that we gave the architects back in 2019 and totally reflects the vision of what we wanted," she says. "It took a long time, but we got there."

AR Design Studio won the Best Architect for a Self Build Home category at the Build It Awards 2024 for this stunning project.

closer look

Timber finish…

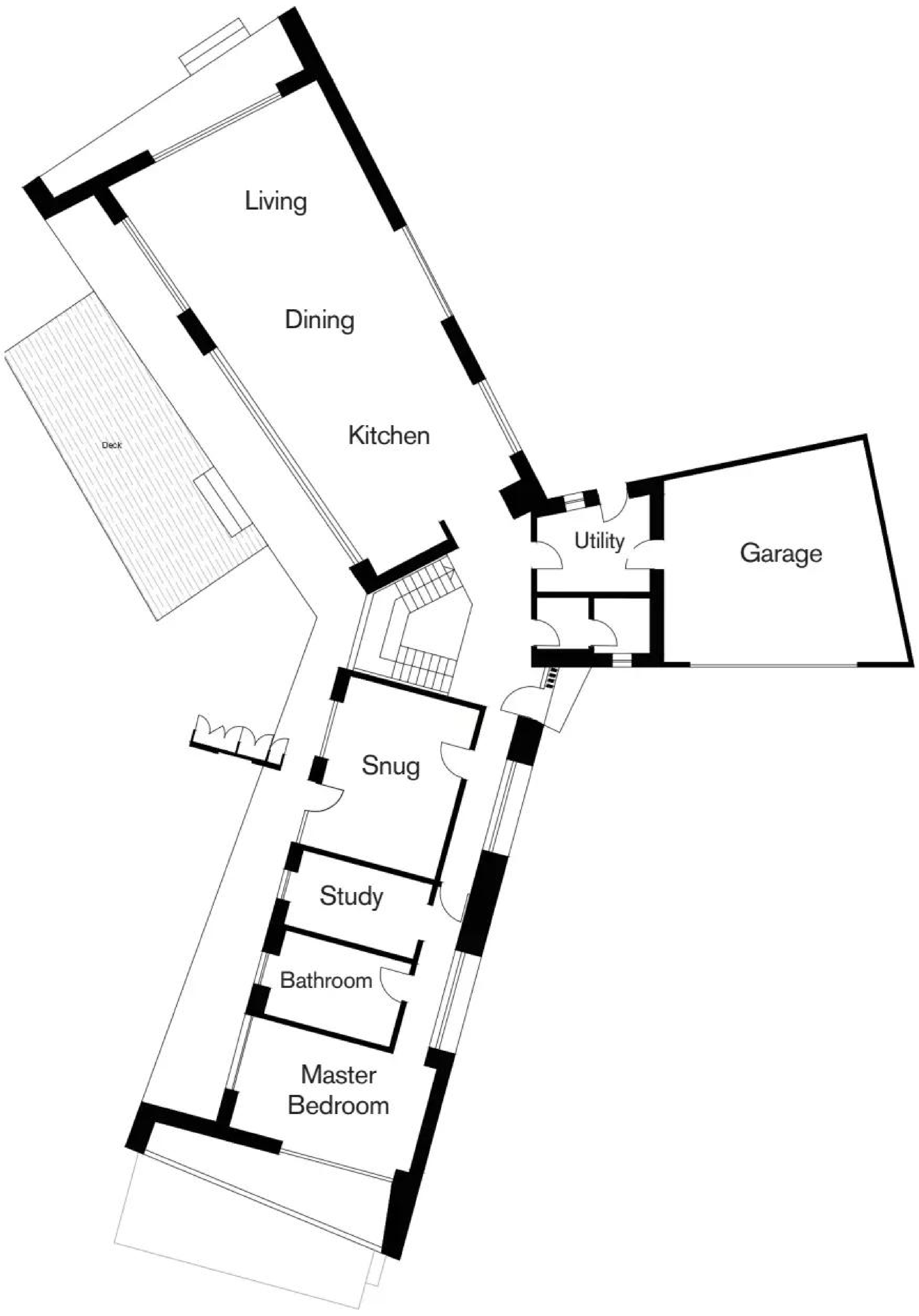

Wall & roof cladding

While the lower ground floor of the property is clad in pale grey long-format bricks from Vande Moortel, the upper level and roof is finished with larch boards supplied by Russwood. "That contrast helps to make the top floor float over the landscape," says Andy Ramus from AR Design Studio. As some of the cladding is more sheltered from the elements, there was a risk that the surface of the wood would develop an uneven appearance over time. To address this potential issue, Esther opted to have the timber boards treated with SiOO:X, thus ensuring a consistent tone across the whole house. "We have overhangs, so the wood would have weathered at different rates – some of it would have stayed yellow while other areas would have greyed," she says. Keen for the property to harmonise with its scenic natural surroundings, Esther is delighted with the result. "I was very conscious we should choose tones that blend in, and this does very well."

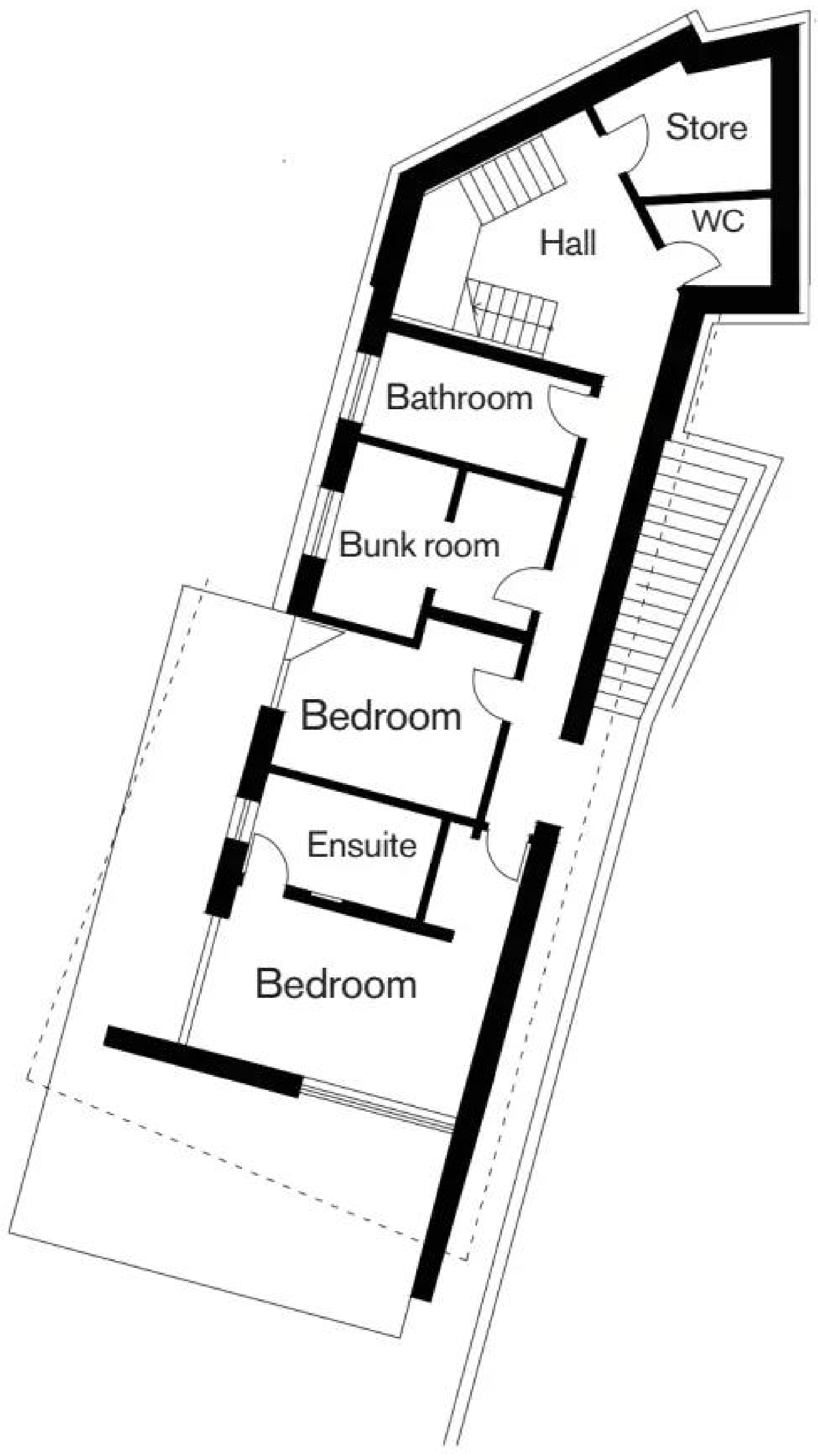
Left: Floating bathroom furniture is paired with large-format porcelain tiles enhance the house's minimal, modern aesthetic

Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£535	9%	£157,736
Demolitions/alterations	£55	1%	£16,200
Substructure & concrete works	£779	13%	£229,939
Superstructure	£593	10%	£175,042
Upper floors	£89	1%	£26,217
Roof structure, coverings & rainwater drainage	£533	9%	£157
Internal walls	£33	<1%	£9,615
Carpentry works	£161	3%	£47,389
Fenestration	£425	7%	£125,327
Plasterboarding	£161	2%	£31,955
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£299	5%	£88,296
Decorations	£42	1%	£12,335
Kitchen, utility & reception installations	£16	<1%	£4,873
Mechanical installations	£237	4%	£70,042
Electrical installations	£169	3%	£49,737
External works	£660	11%	£194,780
Utilities	£25	<1%	£7,250
Sundries	£50	1%	£14,645
Contractor's O&P	£468	8%	£138,000
Additions through contract (incl. landscaping, AV, security)	£706	12%	£208,343
Grand total			**£1,764,909**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **AR Design Studio** 01962 864545 www.ardesignstudio.co.uk STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **AWA** 01794 524447 www.awaengineers.com SAP **Darren Evans** 0333 577 7577 www.darren-evans.co.uk BUILDING CONTROL **Stroma** 01689 493392 www.stromabc.com LANDSCAPING **Ibbotson Studios** 07717 518008 www.ibbotsonstudios.com BUILDER **Matrod Frampton** 01258 840302 www.matrod-frampton.co.uk RENEWABLES CONSULTANT **Mesh Energy** 01420 481573 www.mesh-energy.com BRICKS **Vande Moortel** 020 3633 2422 www.vandemoortel.co.uk TIMBER CLADDING **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk WINDOWS **Velfac** 01480 759510 www.velfac.co.uk LARGE FORMAT GLAZING **Maxlight** 020 8896 0700 www.maxlight.co.uk TIMBER CEILING & FLOORING SUPPLIER **Whitmore's Timber** 01455 209121 www.whitmores.co.uk PORCELAIN TILES **Stone & Ceramic Warehouse** 020 8993 5545 www.sacw.co.uk KITCHEN **Harwoods Kitchens** 01980 611166 www.harwoodskitchendesign.co.uk

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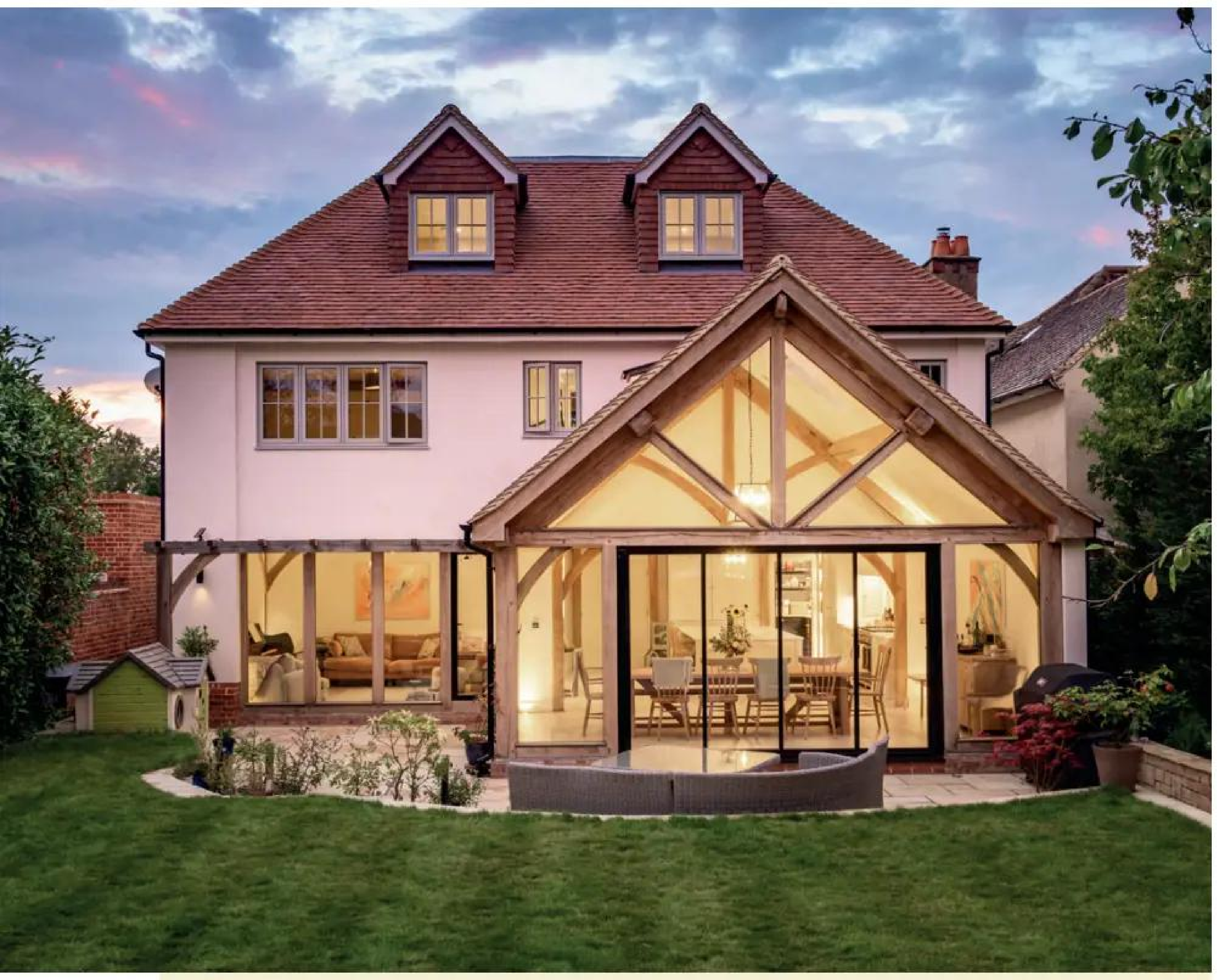
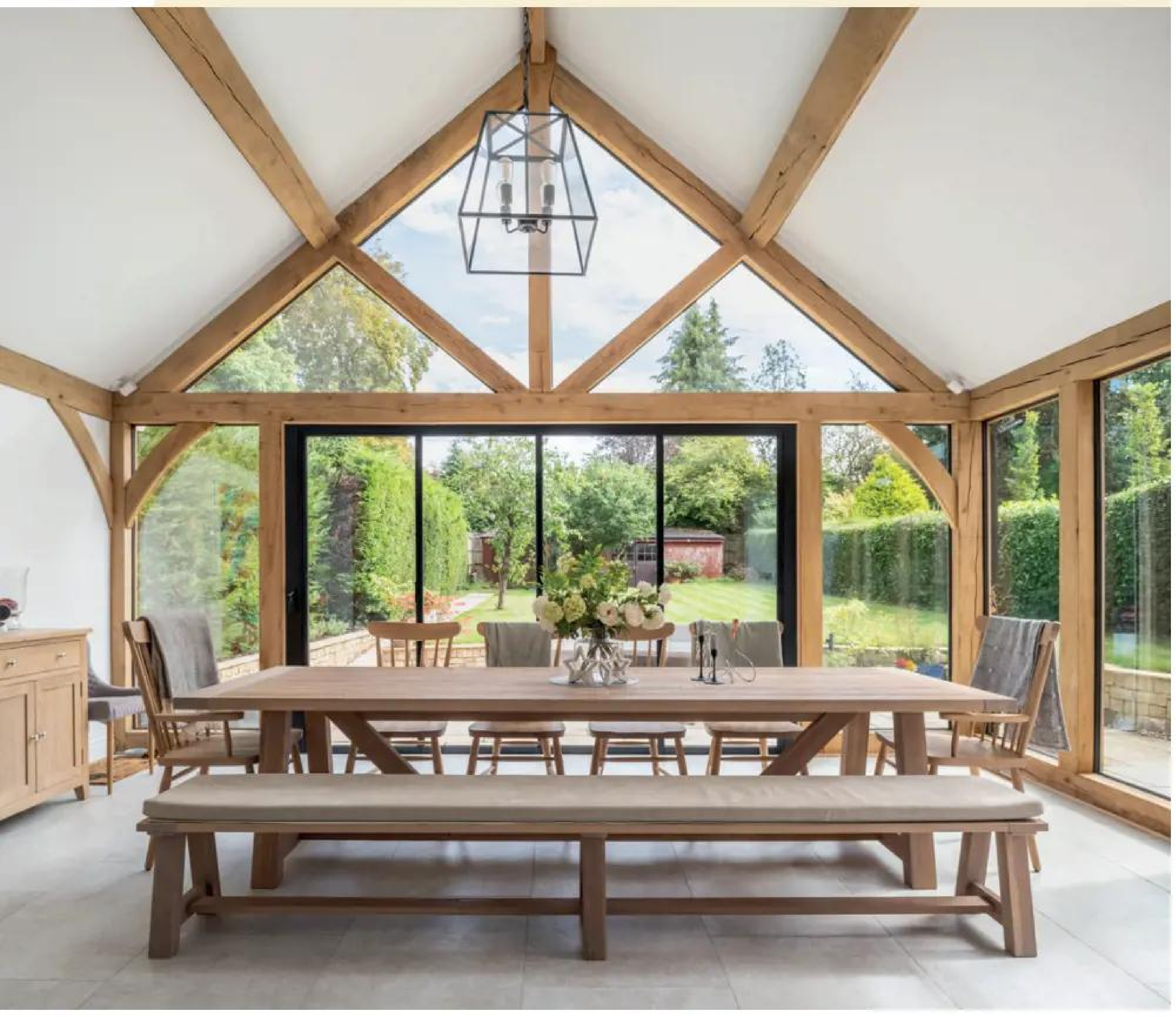
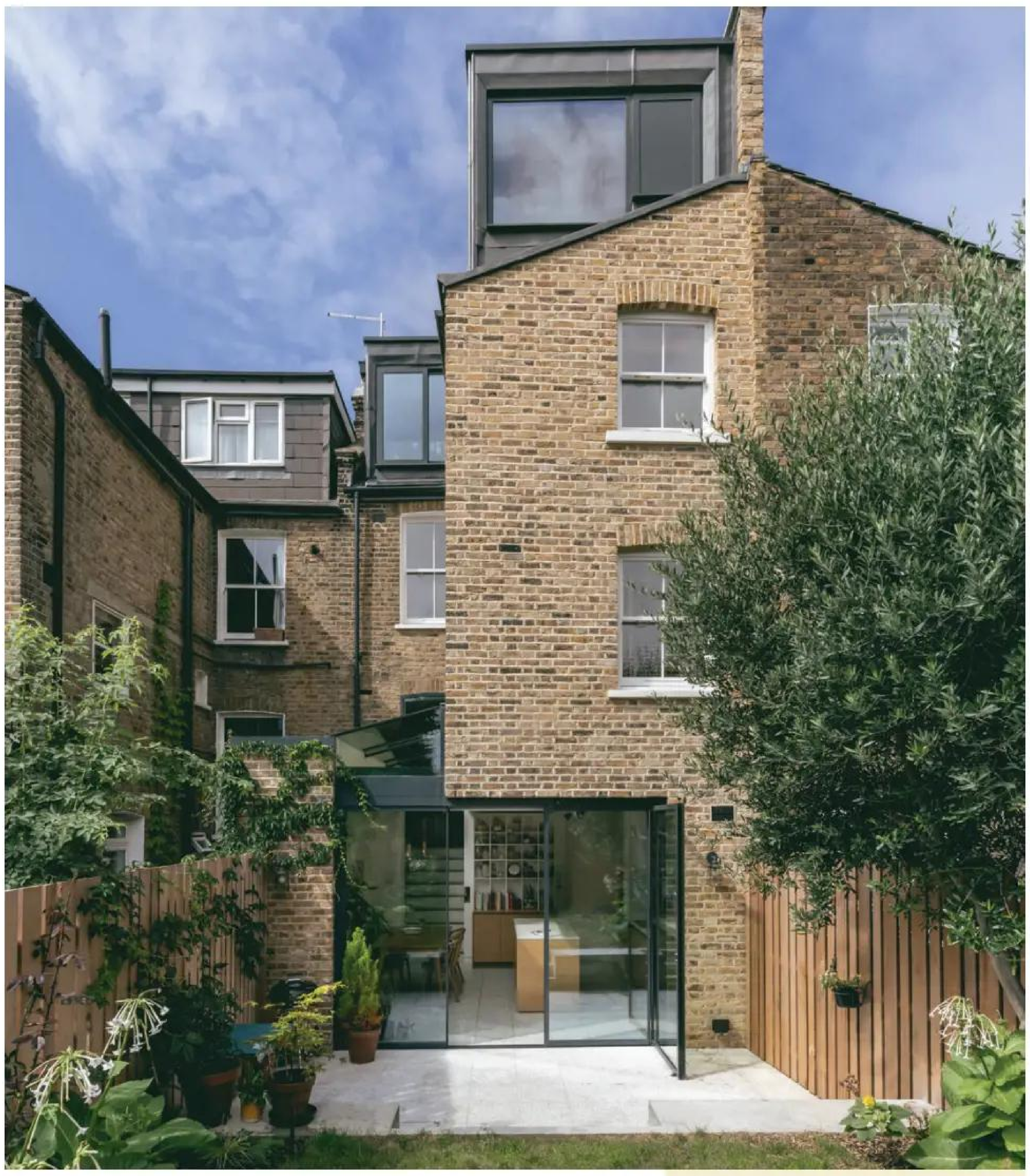
KITCHEN-DINER EXTENSIONS

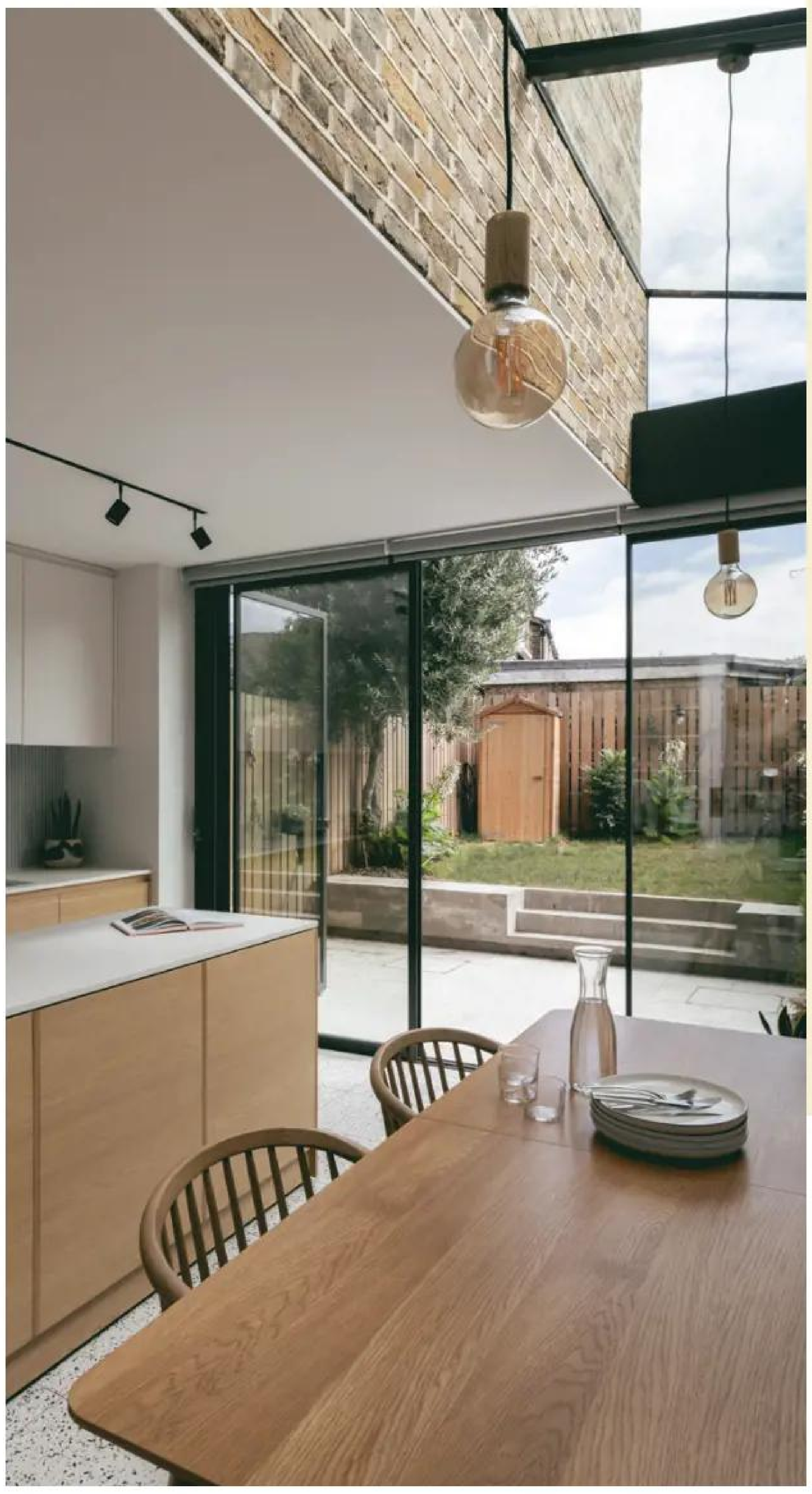
Emily Batesmith has handpicked a range of inspiring projects and spoken to the experts about how to plan your home's new addition



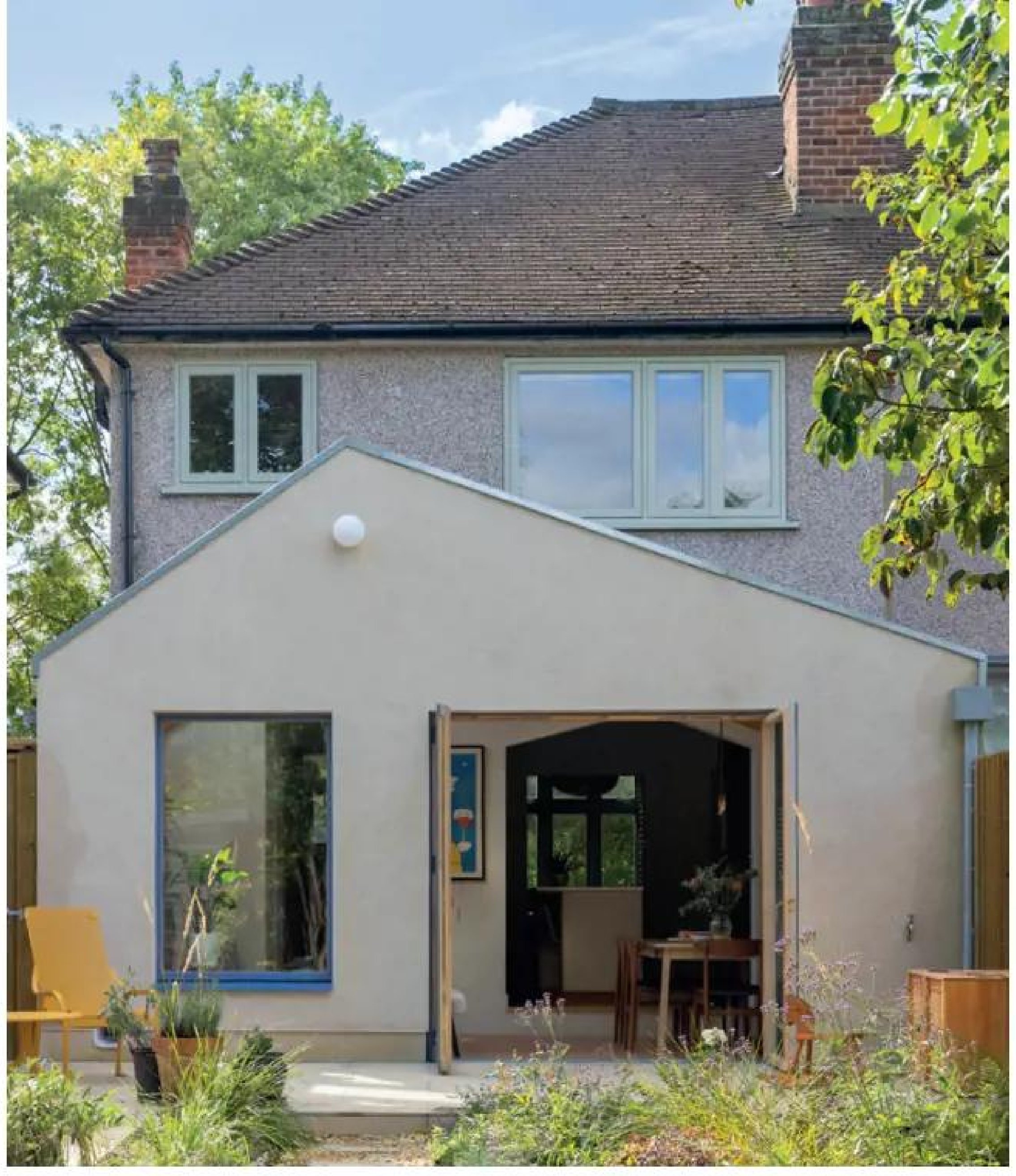
A new oak frame extension by Welsh Oak Frame has brought ample character to this 1930s detached house. The homeowners loved that the wooden structure could be used as an alternative to steel. The design features lots of glass, including a striking glazed gable that floods the kitchen-diner with natural daylight whilst also creating a wow factor focal point. **(welshoakframe.com)**

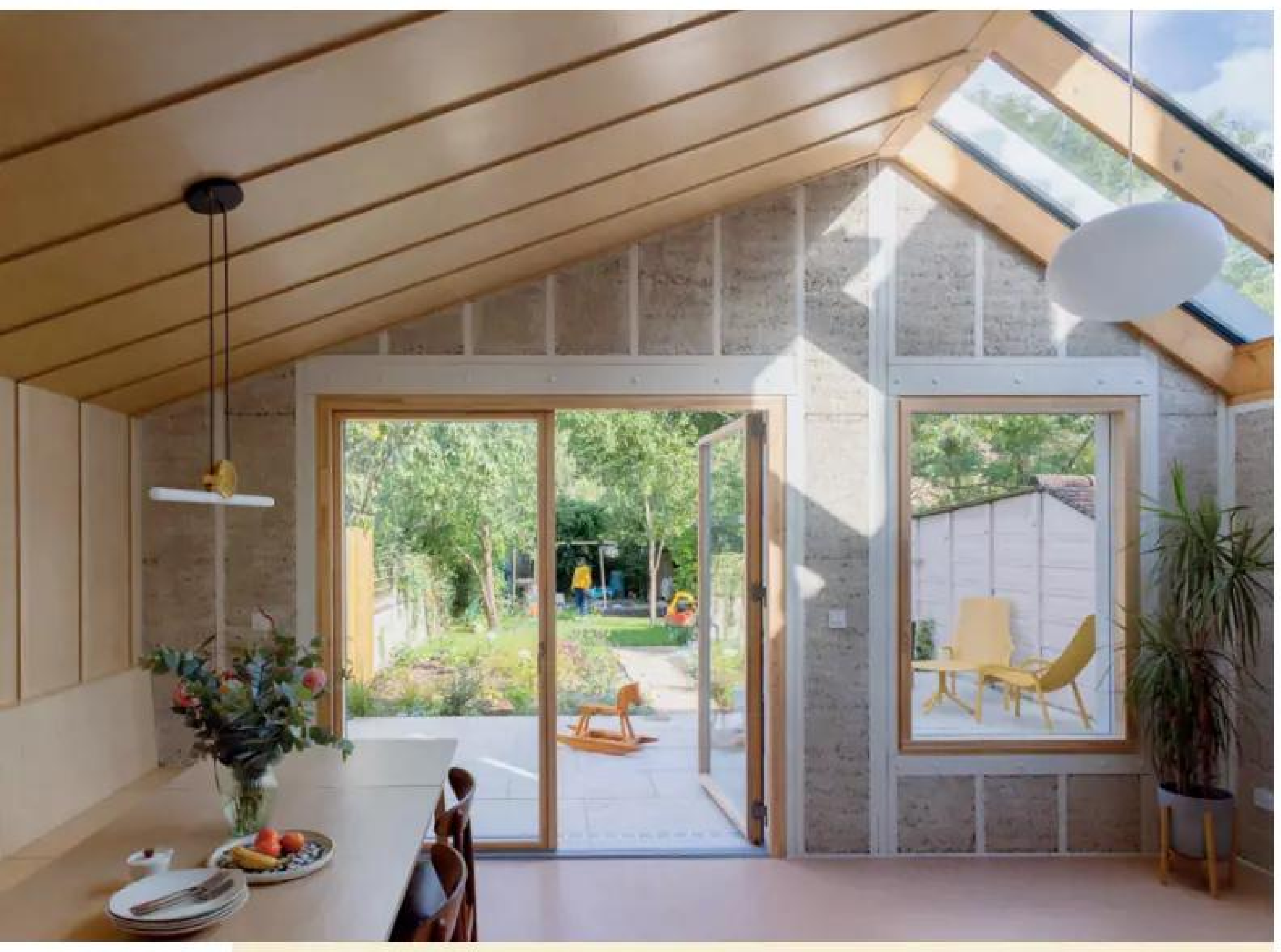




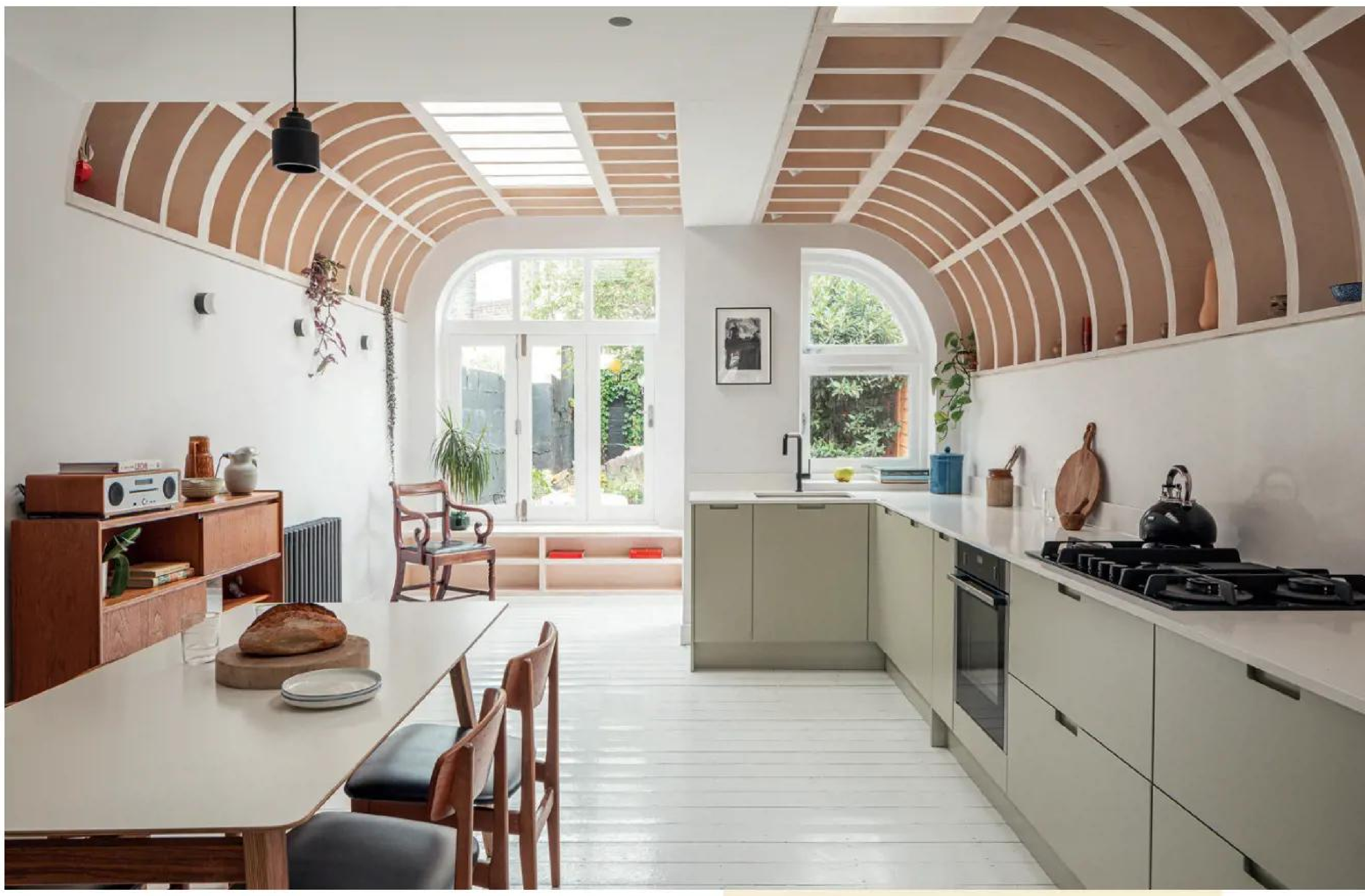


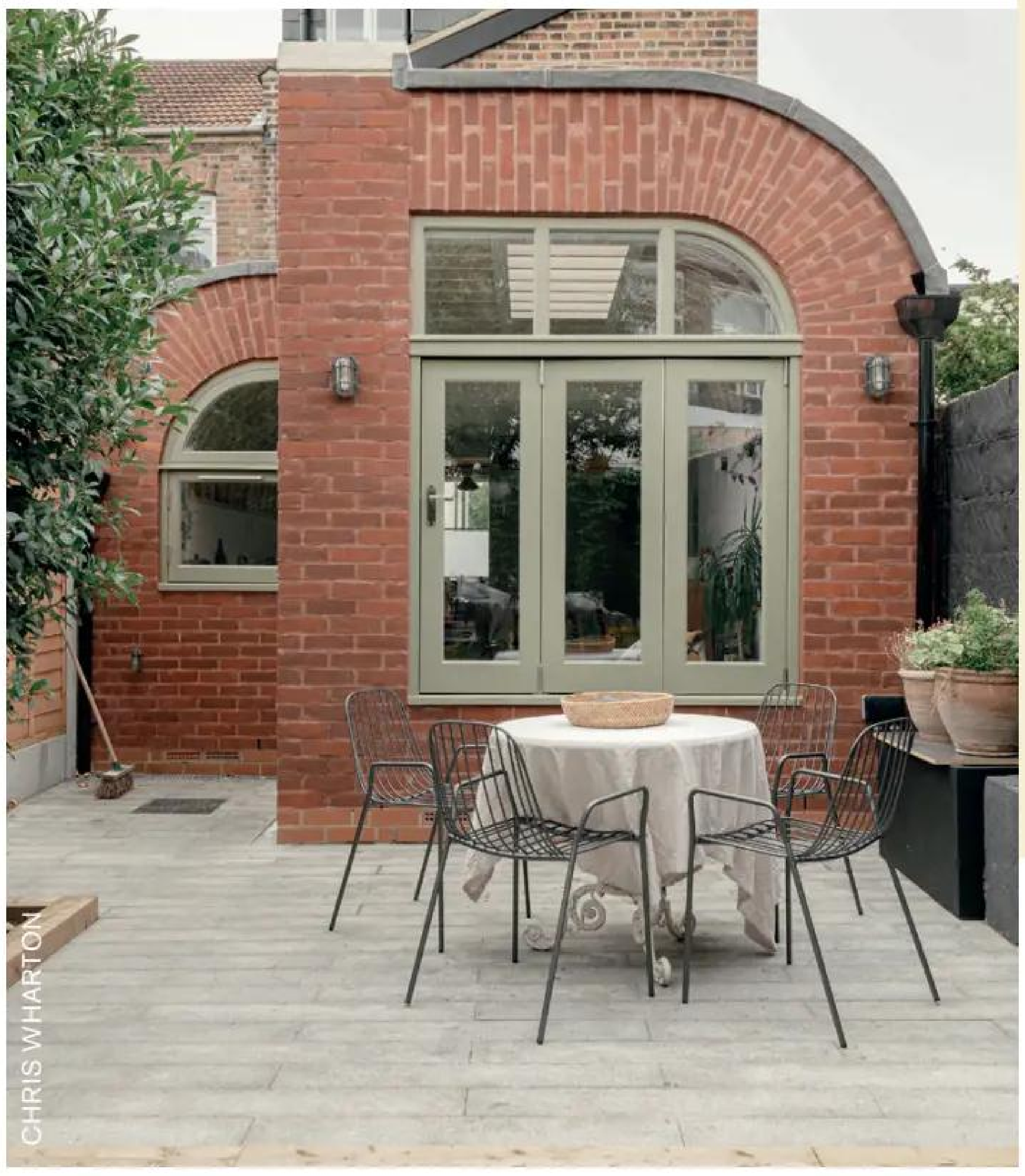
This terraced house has been extended into the side return to create a kitchen-diner that beautifully connects with the property's garden. A glazed roof in the addition looks great alongside matching slide and turn glazed doors from IDSystems. Both glass elements feature slimline frames, enabling unbroken views out and maximum light gain inside the room. **(idsystems.co.uk)**





A timber and hempcrete extension by Nimtim Architects has upgraded this 1930s semi-detached house. The bio-based material absorbs and stores significant amounts of CO2 during production. Internally, the hempcrete has been left exposed and set against the timber structure, with rooflights bringing in ample daylight. The result is a dining space filled with texture and personality, whilst also being breathable and chemical-free – perfect for family life. **(nimtim.co.uk)**





CHRIS WHARTON

The striking arched ceiling in this new extension by Roar Architects is formed using CNC birch ply ribs. Detailed measurements have enabled the team to use standardised components, helping to keep the costs down and creating consistency between the two curved ceiling areas. Skylights and sliding windows filter in ample daylight and offers a fantastic connection with the garden. **(roar-architects.com)**

Q&A DESIGNING YOUR KITCHEN-DINER EXTENSION

Architect Aurore Baulier, founder of Atelier Baulier, shares her top tips for your extension project

Q What should homeowners consider when planning this kind of addition?
A Lifestyle is key – prioritise a design that will support your daily life. A keen cook might want to give more room to the kitchen, while someone else might prefer focusing on the dining space or even a snug to bring the family together. The extension area is likely to be getting more daylight than the room it is extending out from, so consider whether you would rather have a bright kitchen or dining area.

Q What are the best solutions for getting natural light inside the new space?
A Rooflights are a great way of increasing daylight, however, they can also contribute to overheating a room in the summer. So, a mix of rooflights and glazing on the facade is usually a good option. Solar shading of both should be considered. Placing a rooflight as deep into the floor plan as possible will compensate for the loss of direct lighting into the room that the extension is placed in front of.

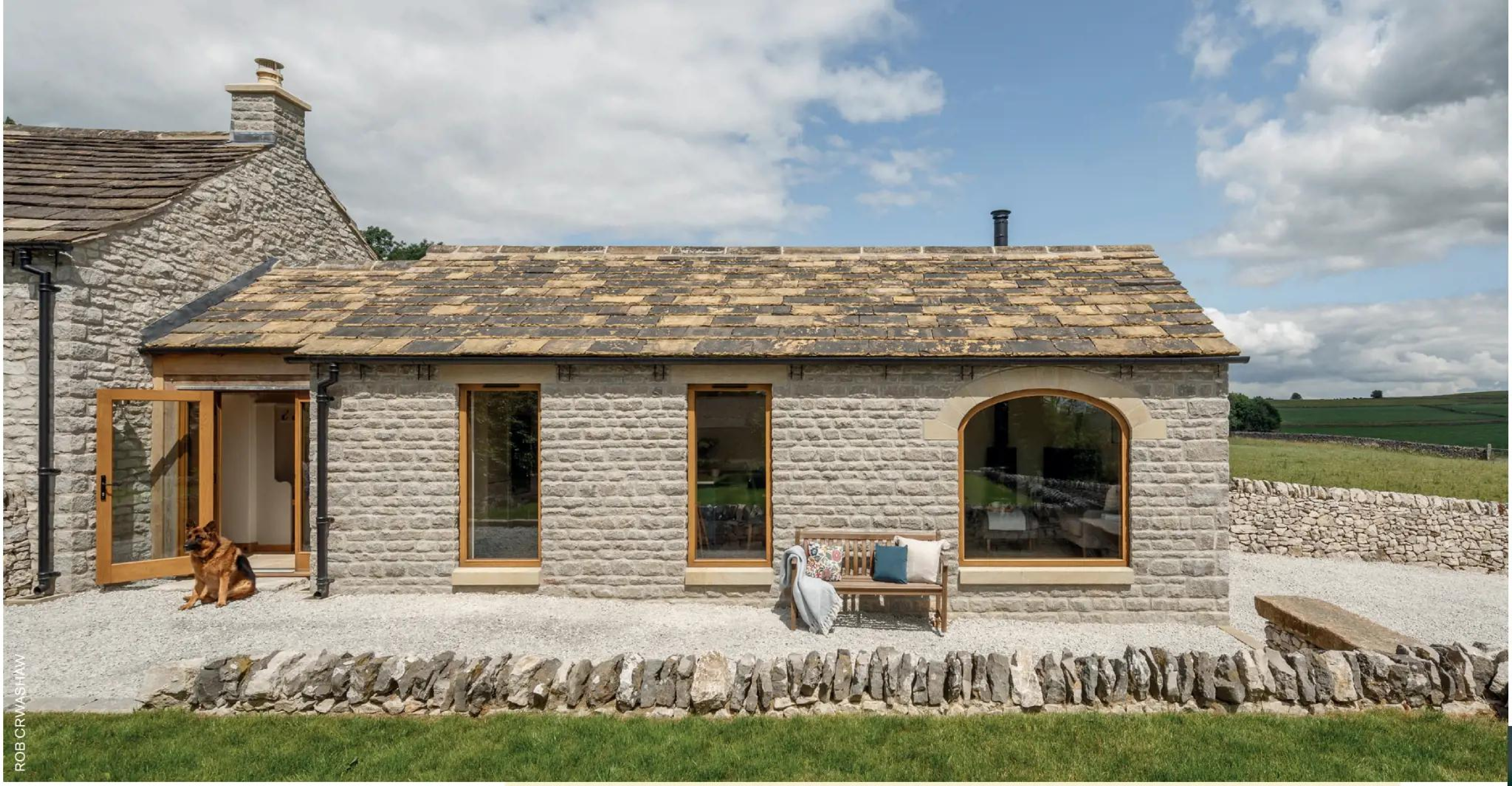
Q Why is it a good idea to work with an architect on this type of project?
A Relying on years of experience, an architect will guide you throughout the process, from coming up with creative solutions tailored to your family's lifestyle, through to assisting with the coordination of building works.

Q What are the rules around permitted development and planning permission?
A There will be permitted development rights if your house isn't in a conservation area or protected by an Article 4. PD extensions have to meet height and size rules, plus use materials similar to the existing house. With a full planning application there is more scope to make the project truly personal and original.

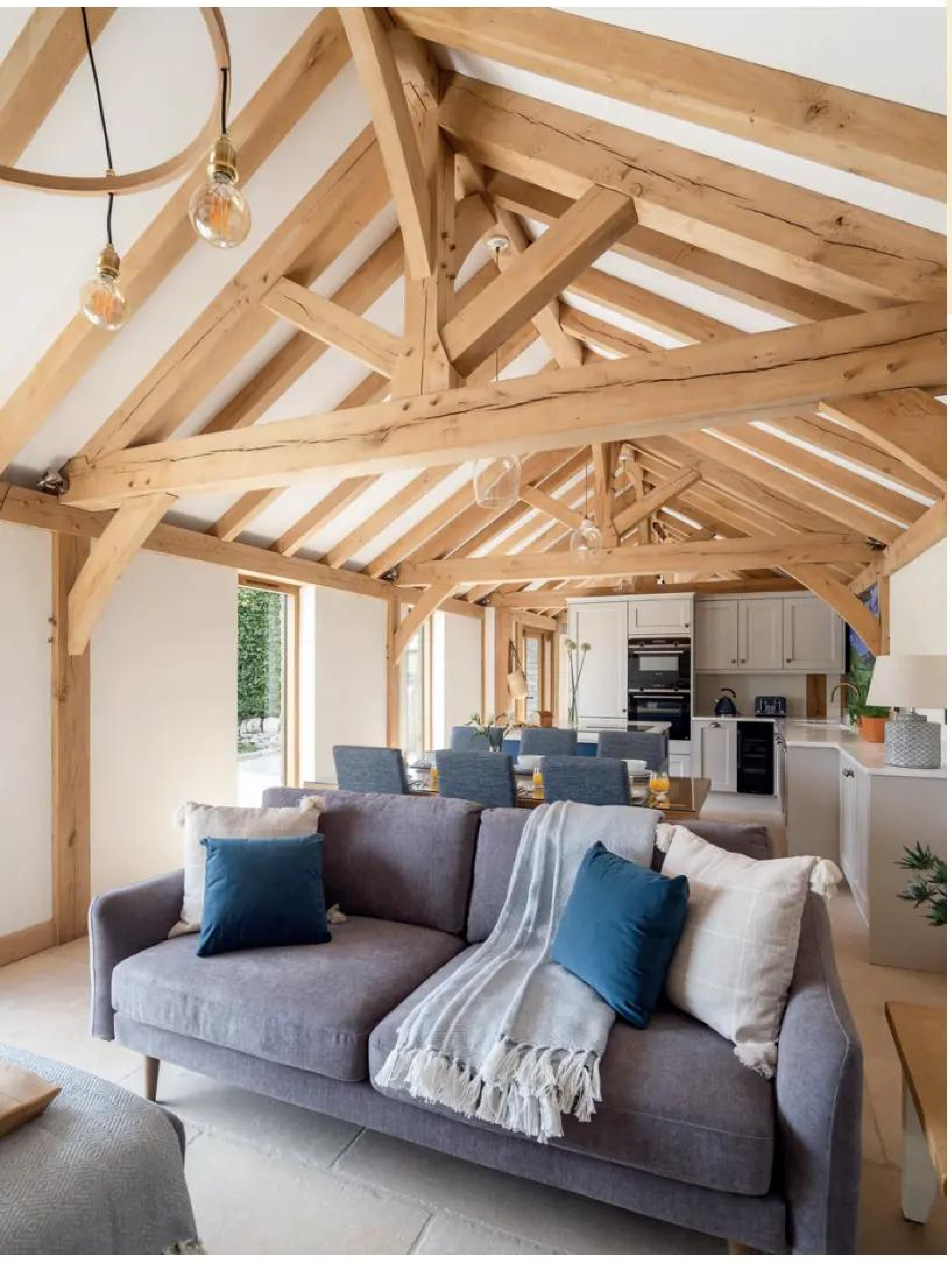
Q How much should homeowners budget for a kitchen diner extension?
A It really varies. You'll need to budget for the extension as well as for the structural works to the existing building and then for the new kitchen fit out. It can quickly reach £100k.

ANDREW MEREDITH

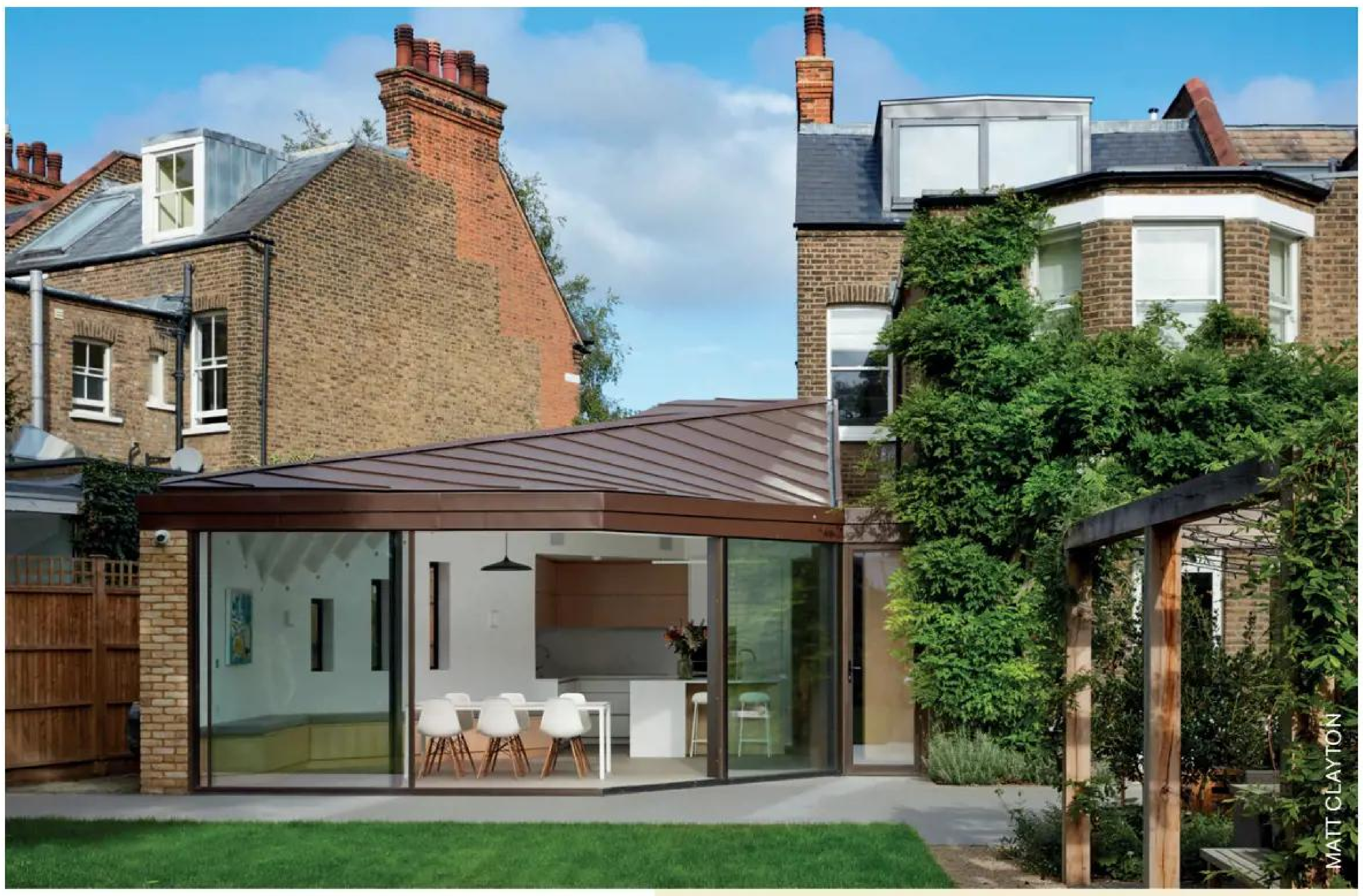
This extension by Atelier Baulier takes its cue from French traditional greenhouses, with the right amount of glazing to bring in light whilst avoiding overheating (atelierbaulier.com)



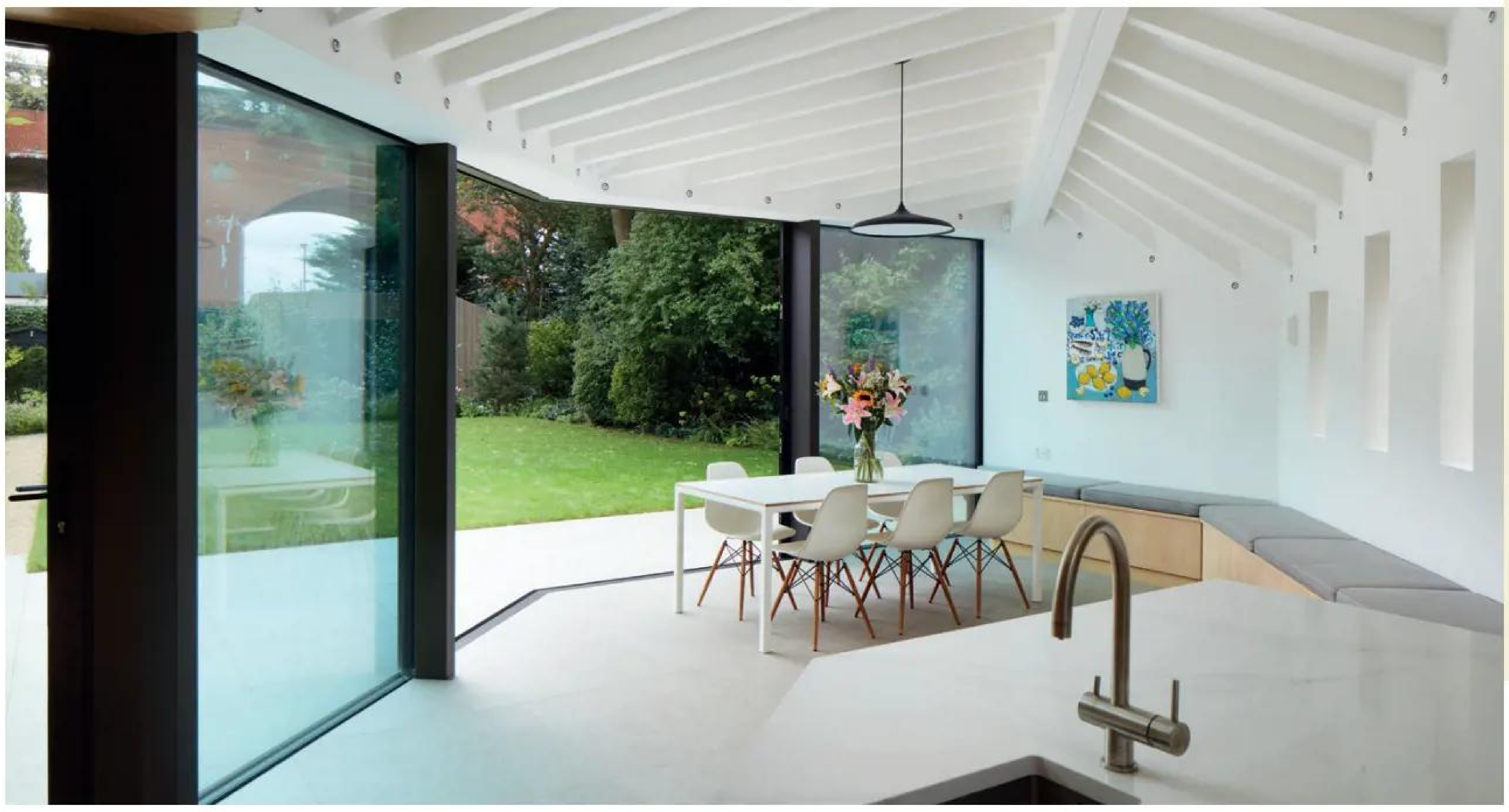
ROB CRWASHAW



This 17th century limestone cottage now benefits from an elegant oak frame extension from Oakwrights. The addition is finished in stone that complements the historical character of the original building. Inside, beautiful exposed beams bring warmth and texture to the new kitchen-dining-living space. Large panes of face glazing create a light-filled room, including a playful curved window that perfectly frames the view out from the sitting area. **(oakwrights.co.uk)**



MATT CLAYTON



Designed by Scenario Architecture, this sweeping addition to a Victorian property replaces a previous extension. The new roof, which has a zinc finish and is formed specifically to allow a transition from the highest point to the low eaves height that respects the neighbours at the adjacent boundary wall. Inside, the ceiling is fanned and finished in a crisp white. Circulation and storage in the kitchen-diner has been thoroughly considered to create an organised and practical space. **(scenarioarchitecture.com)**

Two sets of bifold doors concertina back to reveal a fully open corner in this stunning kitchen-diner extension. The addition replaces an old conservatory and has ticked the box for the homeowners' brief of a great indoor-outdoor connection. The look has been created with load-bearing masonry around a steel frame, with Kloeber's aluminium KustomFold doors offering the wow factor openable glazed corner. **(kloeber.co.uk)**

This vibrant yellow extension by Unknown Works is formed using cross-laminated timber (CLT). The edges of the addition are gently rounded, tempered to bring softness to the bold design. The use of stainless steel rain chains is a Japanese guttering style that are minimally obtrusive. Inside, the CLT is exposed, creating a contemporary feeling kitchen-diner. **(unknown.works)**

Q&A PLANNING YOUR NEW KITCHEN

Jane Everett, creative director at Naked Kitchens, shares how to get the best out of this important feature

Q What are your tips for getting the kitchen layout right in an extension?
A You'll need a full overall plan of the extension, along with an understanding of how the space will be used and what zones are needed – for instance, kitchen, entertaining, seating etc. A good understanding of circulation space around these areas needs to be considered to ensure that the room flows ergonomically.

Q What's the best positioning for the kitchen within a typical example of this kind of extension?
A Where the addition opens up and expands the room, it works well to have the kitchen situated close to the join with the original building and locate the seating at the far end, especially where this leads out onto the garden.

Q How do you balance a kitchen island alongside dining in the same room?
A An island is a great use of space, especially in wide rooms. Where dining is also incorporated, careful consideration needs to be paid as to where the seating will be placed. Kitchen island stools may create a clash with the table chairs, so plan for this in the design phase.

Q What kitchen styles are en vogue right now for extensions?
A Bold colours combined with timber accents continue to be very popular for kitchen extension projects. Open shelving works well between the living area to the kitchen and can be beautifully styled to soften the transition between the two zones.

This light-filled extension features a stunning new culinary space from Naked Kitchens (nakedkitchens.com)

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Heat pumps vs biomass

Eco heating expert David Hilton compares these low-carbon heating contenders, and looks at which will best suit your home

ISTOCK.COM/NANCY PAUWELS

Above: Air source heat pumps can be suitable for a range of new build and existing homes – depending on the heat loads, emitter type and insulation levels

Over the past couple of years, the choices we're faced with when deciding on a new or replacement heating system have become ever more complex. Products and technologies that were previously deemed to be at the cutting edge of sustainability and energy-saving have now become mainstream – even encouraged.

This whole new world has been rapidly thrust upon us. In that context, it can be very difficult to know whether we're being sold to or advised when we speak to installers and suppliers. So, where can you go for the cold, hard facts that will help you make informed decisions? Right here! Two of the main contenders in the eco debate are heat pumps and biomass. But what exactly are these technologies, how do they work and how can you tell which is best for you and your home?

UNDERSTANDING HEAT PUMPS

Let's start with heat pumps. As the name suggests, they pump heat – moving it from one place to another and enhancing it to a more usable form. A heat pump uses electricity to power a refrigeration process that extracts heat energy from its local environment and transfers it to the water in your home's central heating system.

Air source heat pumps

A heat pump is named after the environment that it gets its heat from. So, an air source heat pump (ASHP) extracts energy from the ambient air around the outdoor fan unit. The colder the air, the harder the heat pump needs to work and the lower its efficiency. An ASHP can extract up to 12°C's worth of thermal energy, which it then concentrates for space heating and domestic hot water.

The outside fan unit needs space around it to avoid impeding the air flow. The cold air that comes out the front of the heat pump must not be deflected into the back of the unit, as this could severely lower efficiency and potentially cause the system to freeze.

Ground source heat pumps

You guessed it: a ground source heat pump (GSHP) extracts its energy from the earth, via collector pipes buried either horizontally or in vertical bore holes.

For the horizontal collector, assuming damp and cohesive soil, you would typically need around two or three times the floor area of the home. So, a 200m^2 house requires between 400m^2 and 600m^2 of suitable ground. If you are on chalk, shale or any other aerated, porous soil, the collector could be double that size. If you have a digger – or a friend with one – then digging your own trenches will save a large portion of the up front cost.

The borehole solution is more expensive to install, and slightly more efficient in use, but requires a far smaller garden. Either way, consult a geologist or take advice from a reputable engineer to confirm the true magnitude of collector you'll need.

A GSHP unit is roughly the size of a fridge and is usually installed in a plant room or garage. You may also need two cylinders, each around that same size, plus a similar area to accommodate the manifolds and pipework. That's a total indoor plant area requirement equivalent to roughly four fridges.

Grants for heat pumps

Heat pumps are currently supported by a £7,500 Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) grant for existing or self build homes in England and Wales. This is issued as a voucher against the installation of an ASHP or GSHP in eligible properties. To qualify, the heat pump must be installed by an MCS-certified (Microgeneration Certification Scheme) installer. Existing homes must have a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

UNDERSTANDING BIOMASS BOILERS

Rather than move heat, biomass systems burn fuel. This can be any organic combustible material, but it usually refers to wood logs, chips or pellets. Other options include

Below: Pellets are the most common form of biomass fuel for domestic homes

ISTOCK.COM/URBAZON

HOW TO CHOOSE

When it comes to comparing heat pumps and biomass boilers, the evaluation isn't too difficult. As we've seen, each technology has its own nuances. These differences – combined with the scope of your project and what you want out of the system – are the deciding factors that will help you identify the right fit for your specific needs and property type. Here's where to start:

Log biomass: Best suited to larger properties that require a high-temperature emitter circuit. Can be very low-bills and low-carbon if you have enough land to grow your own coppice for a sustainable fuel source.

Wood chip: Excellent for buildings with a heat load of over 40kW. Examples could include several cottages connected via a district heat network, a hospitality venue or a very large home. If you have access to wood waste that can be chipped, this will lower running costs.

Pellet boilers: Strong choice for homes with high heat loads and radiator-based heating – but you'll need enough space to construct a conveniently-located pellet store for deliveries and to accommodate the hopper.

Ground source heat pump: Can suit some smaller properties, but the scale of the installation typically works best for well-insulated and draughtproofed larger properties, (250m^2 or bigger) with enough land for the ground collector and an indoor plant room for the equipment. Check the capacity of your electric supply, as GSHPs over about 16kW may not be suitable for single-phase systems (requiring an upgrade to three-phase).

Air source heat pump: Great for a wide range of homes up to around 200m^2 (existing buildings) or up to 300m^2 (well-insulated new builds) on a single-phase electricity supply. Larger or less efficient properties may need multiple ASHPs, potentially requiring planning permission and/or an upgrade to a three-phase electric supply.

The choice is yours – but the better you define your needs and expectations for the technology, the easier that choice will be, and the more likely your heating system will deliver as promised.

Below: The Biowin2 Deluxe from Windhager (www.windhager.com) is a modern, easy-install and low-maintenance pellet heating system, requiring ash removal just once or twice per year and servicing every two years

windhager
BEST HEATING TECHNOLOGY

grass-based fuels – typically pellets or compressed logs made from miscanthus – although these have a higher ash content and aren't suitable for many high-end models.

An advantage of biomass boilers for some homes is that they produce high temperature heat. They can deliver up to 4-5kW of heat per kg of wood, although the yield will be lower if it's burned wet or at a low temperature. The most efficient burn occurs at gasification temperatures of over 1,000°C. Cooler temperatures mean not all the fuel is fully combusted, so some calorific value remains in soot or ash rather than being converted into heat.

Log boilers

Not all biomass burners are the same. Log versions are usually batch systems. A chamber in the boiler is loaded with logs, which are all the same length and split to similar sizes. The chamber is closed, fuel ignited and the burn temperature lifted to gasification level.

The heat is then transferred to a large water store, typically sized at a ratio of around 50 litres of water per kilowatt rating of the boiler. So, a 20kW boiler would need to be coupled with a thermal store of at least 1,000 litres. Depending on the property's heat load, you may need a daily burn in midwinter, stretching to weekly in the warmer months.

DID YOU KNOW?

Some manufacturers offer biomass boilers capable of burning several fuel types. One example would be a log burner that can, with a simply user-managed change of the grate, switch to burning pellets. This gives you flexibility, for instance if a given fuel type is more affordable when you come to order.

Woodchip boilers

These are a little more versatile than log boilers, as the woodchip is fed in and burned in real time rather than batch-burned for thermal storage. The main issue is the woodchips themselves, which are often inconsistent in size and density, and can contain bark, leaves or other waste products. For the best burn and to ensure safe storage, it's essential to use low-moisture, low-dust chips stored in regularly turned and well-ventilated piles.

The requirement for bulk fuel storage and handling equipment – along with high heat outputs – make woodchip boilers best suited to large properties with heat loads of over 40kW (so, not your average home).

Pellet boilers

Wood pellet systems are probably the closest low-carbon alternative to a traditional gas or fossil fuel boiler. Pellets can be loaded manually in a single room burner, much like a woodburning stove. Alternatively, they can be used in a central heating system boiler with automatic feed and near on-demand heat production. Ignition takes longer than gas but the pellets are a very consistent size, density and quality, ensuring even combustion and minimal waste.

The biggest challenge is storage. Pellets can be purchased in manageable bags but are more commonly delivered by a blower truck in bulk. You'll typically need a store big enough to hold at least one or two tonnes of pellets, fed into a hopper that in turn supplies the boiler. They must not get wet or be allowed to sweat, as moisture will damage the pellets and cause issues with fuel feed and combustion.

Grants for biomass systems

Biomass boilers are supported by the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, with a £5,000 grant (smaller than for heat pumps) available for eligible installations carried out by a registered MCS installer. To qualify, the boiler must deliver the heat to the home via a wet (water-based) central heating system. The property must also be in a rural location with no mains gas connection.

DAVID HILTON

David Hilton is a renewables and ventilation installer, with over 35 years' experience. He has a Masters in sustainable architecture, and is a well-respected authority on building fabrics, renewables and conventional heating.

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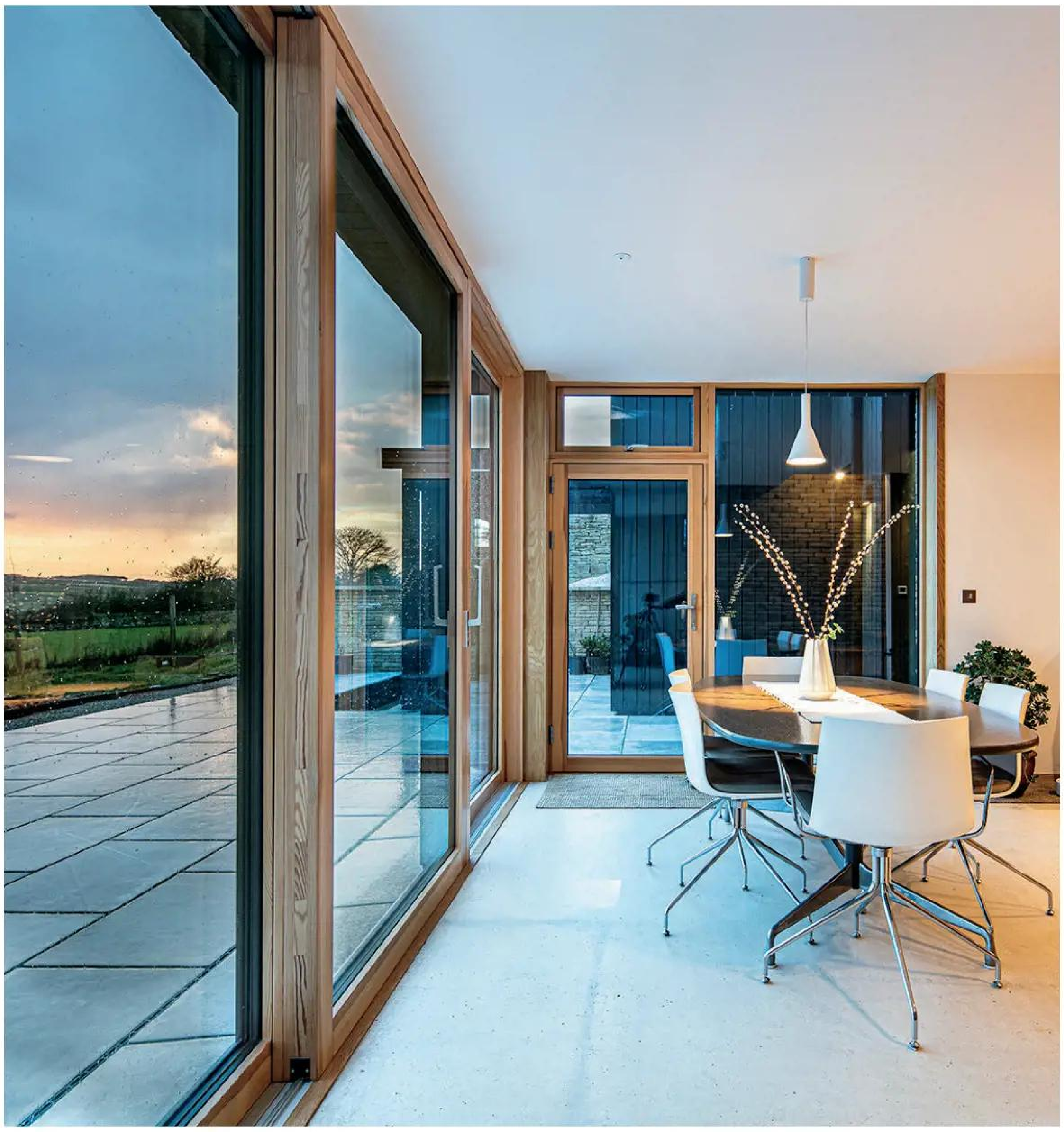

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PERFECTING PICTURE WINDOWS

From design to performance, Amandine Lefevre explains how to capture the perfect view with this modern glazing feature

Above: Part of a self build project by Eco Design Consultants, this bay window projects outward from the house, with a sleek black timber rainscreen cladding – lending a contemporary edge to the architecture

Above right: Kloeber supplied the glazing for this East Sussex home, including this oriel window with an oak-clad seat inside – the perfect setting to relax while taking in the landscapes

For most self builders and renovators, a beautiful view is high on the wish list when it comes to choosing or planning a home. Having that close connection between indoors and out can be one of the most desirable features of modern living – and when it's done well, it can transform both comfort and style. Picture windows invite the outside world in, creating uplifting, bright spaces that offer ever-changing scenes of the surrounding landscape. Here, I'm speaking to glazing experts and architects about how to get this feature right – from material choices to practical considerations, across both new builds and retrofits.

Designing picture windows

Picture windows are generally large, fixed (non-opening) panels of glazing designed to make the landscape an integral part of the interior, and they naturally work best where there's a lovely vista to frame. Used thoughtfully, they become more than just a source of light and can make a real architectural statement.

While they're most often associated with contemporary homes, with careful detailing, attention to proportion and thoughtful frame selection, picture windows can make an attractive addition to almost any building type. Crucially, they should appear intentional and harmonious with the rest of the fenestration, rather than feeling like random openings puncturing the wall. "They have the most impact in a large space – a generous living area or a double-height hallway – where they can really open up the room," says Matt Higgs, managing director at Kloeber.

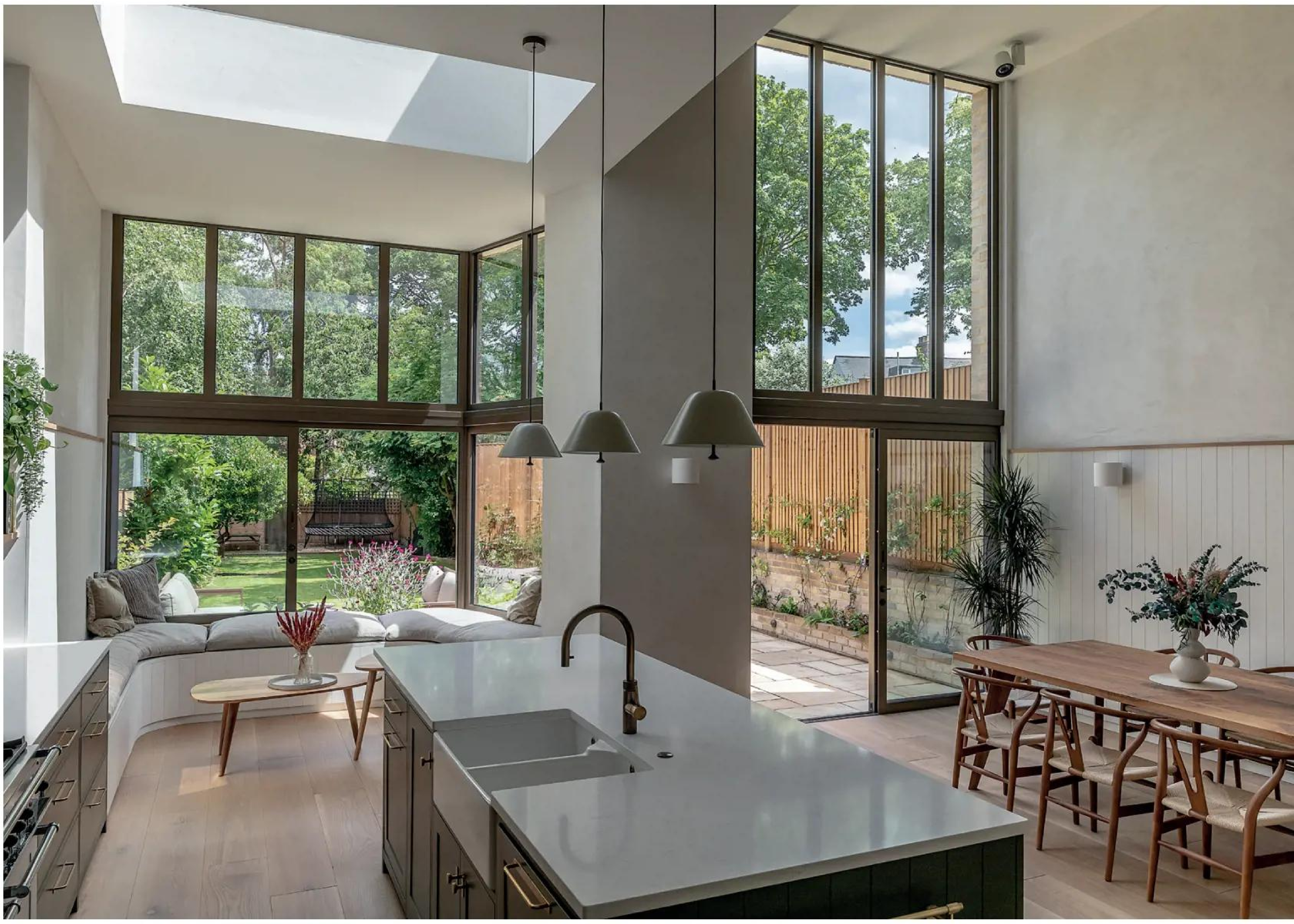
Beyond the view itself, the shape and proportion of the glazing can enhance both the architectural merit and interior design of your home. For instance, tall, slim picture windows arranged in a row can complement vertical cladding for a contemporary look. "You can also consider circular, porthole-style windows, which work well as focal points in a gable end or stairwell," says Matt.

Positioning is crucial, both in terms of the outlook and how the internal space is used. "Think about how you'll live in the room," advises Matt. "Some homeowners choose a window that drops low to the floor and build in a deep internal sill to use as a seating area – it creates a lovely spot to sit and enjoy the vistas."

Of course, a key factor is ensuring the location of the window frames the best views. That isn't just about which elevation it's on, but also the height from which you will be looking through it and how the perspective changes in different areas of the room. "In a kitchen, you're mostly standing, so the window should be set higher up," says Alan Budden, architect and founder of Eco Design Consultants. "In a living space, where you're sitting down, it can be lower – or somewhere in between."

Specifying the glazing

Whether you're planning a new build or upgrading an existing home, choosing the best glass spec for your



Right: This double-height extension features a sliding picture window and doors set beneath fixed frame glazing – all from IDSystems – which flood the space with natural light and yield ever-changing views of the garden, treetops and sky

picture windows is crucial for both comfort and performance.

Glazing specification should be considered early. High-efficiency double-or triple-glazed panels will be best for winter comfort, but you may also need to consider solar control coatings or external shading to avoid overheating in the summer. A glazing expert will be able to help you balance cost, performance and maximising views.

Very often, picture windows will need to be fitted with laminated glass, which is designed to enhance security and safety. This is required for all ground floor or easily accessible windows in a new home under Part Q of the Building Regulations. In renovations, safety glass is mandatory for low-level windows (such as floor-to-ceiling panels) and certain other cases.

It is important to consider sound performance, too. "Acoustic laminated glass is ideal for reducing external noise – perfect for homes near busy roads or schools," explains Martyn Haworth, director at Bison Frames.

Installation details

For the sleekest result, hide as much of the frame as possible within the surrounding wall structure. "Recessing the frame so that all you see is the glazing creates that seamless finish, which is crucial with picture windows," says Ed Stobart, technical sales manager at IDSystems.

If that isn't viable for cost or practical reasons, aim for slim-framed units – aluminium is a top candidate and low-maintenance to boot. Timber windows will require slightly thicker frames, but the internal finish offers a natural warmth that could work with your interior decor goals. Regardless of your choice of materials, ensure the product provides excellent airtightness and weather protection for year round comfort.

In terms of structure, the opening itself must be designed to prevent deflection, which typically means integrating a suitable lintel or steel beam above. If the window's to be installed in an exposed or coastal location, wind loads on large, flat glass panels must be considered at the early design and specification stage.

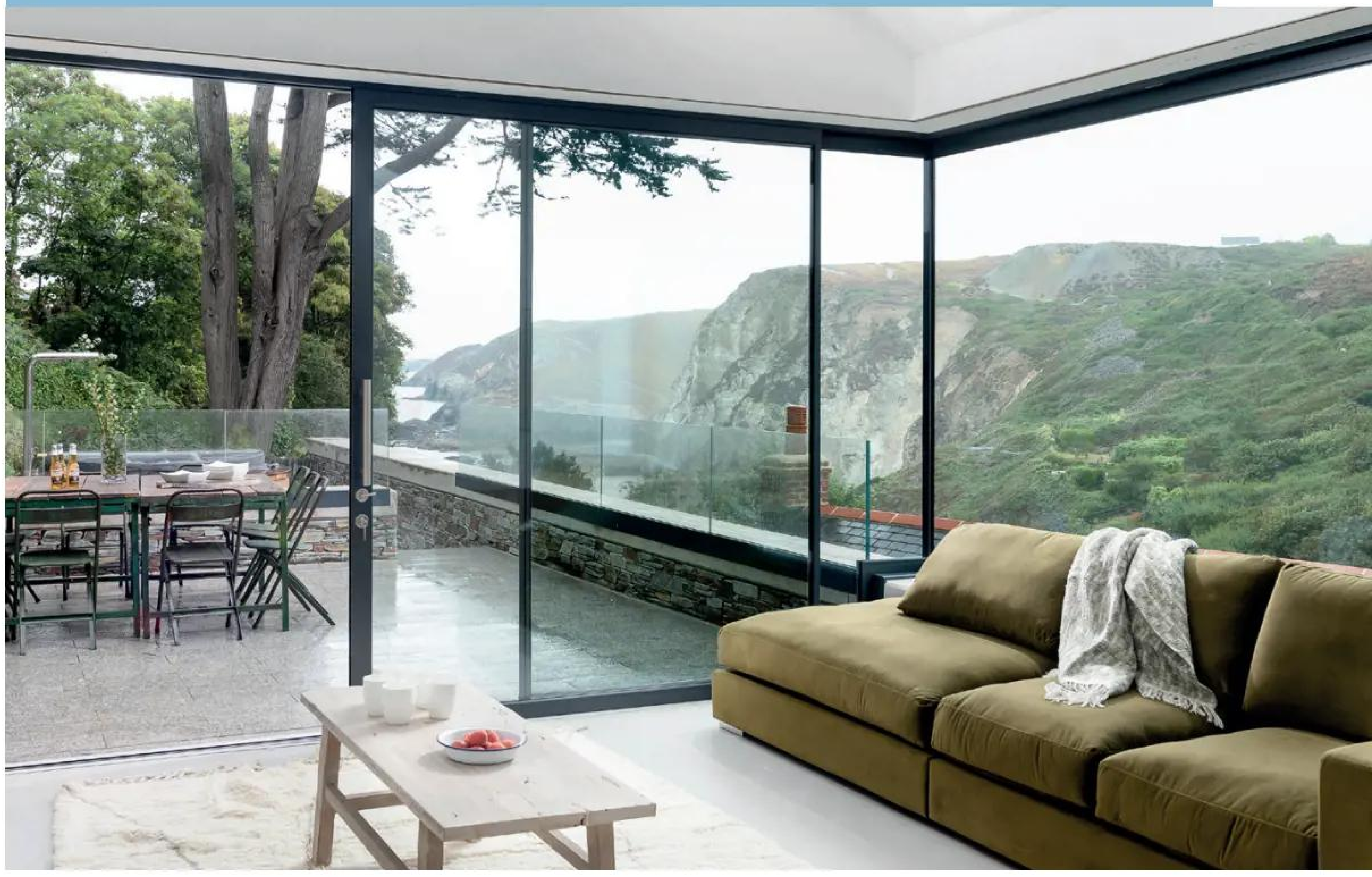
Another key factor to think about is how deep the panel sits within the surrounding structure – it should ideally

CASE STUDY CAPTURING COASTAL VIEWS

Perched above a Cornish cove, this fisherman's cottage balances heritage charm with modern living. The brief for Ian Chalk Architects was to create modern, open-plan spaces that made the most of the home's coastal setting. IDSystems was brought in to install sensitive yet striking picture windows.

"From that elevated position, you've got a panoramic outlook over the cliffs, the beach and the sea – and you simply couldn't achieve that without large picture windows," explains Ed Stobart. "That's what this location is all about: its connection with the surrounding landscape." The team specified a Sunflex UK SAL window system and a frameless glass-to-glass corner joint. This combination delivers both clarity and performance while blending with the stone and timber palette of the original building.

Double glazing with solar control was also selected to reduce heat from entering the home from direct sunlight. "The frameless glass was absolutely critical," says Ed. "Because the view runs down the slope towards the coast, any visible framework would have compromised the result."



PICTURE WINDOW FAQS

Ed Stobart is technical sales manager at IDSystems. He has over 20 years of experience working closely with thousands of customers, builders and architects to offer advice and support on glazing solutions for their homes.

Q How much should I budget for picture windows?

A It really depends on the project, but as a guide you're generally looking at somewhere between £600-£750 per m^2. The overall cost can vary depending on what else is involved. If your supplier is already on site fitting other windows and doors, the additional cost of a picture window is relatively small. However, if it is a standalone installation where they're just coming in to fit that one feature window, then the relative costs of fitting the system will naturally be higher.

Alan Budden founded Eco Design Consultants in 2008 with a mission to create sustainable homes that people love to live in. He specialises in designing buildings that are not only highly efficient but visually appealing, healthy and comfortable all year round.

Q How can I determine the best window size?

A It's really valuable for us to experience daylight and see how it changes in the day. Having that movement of light across a space brings it to life and doesn't always require a large window – even a smaller opening can achieve that beautifully. A full-height window might look impressive, but it can be harder to control overheating unless you add deep shading or overhangs. Often, a shallower panel works better – it's easier to shade, more efficient and the lower part rarely adds much to the view.

Matt Higgs is managing director at Kloeber, one of the UK's leading suppliers of bespoke glazing solutions, offering high-quality, award-winning windows and doors. The company's products help self builders bring design-led, energy-efficient projects to life.

Q Do I need planning permission to install picture windows?

A In most cases, installing picture windows is considered to be permitted development, so planning permission is not typically required. This is especially the case if you are replacing an existing window with one of a similar size. There are exceptions, particularly for listed buildings, conservation areas or if you're significantly altering your property's facade. It is always worth checking with your local planning authority before going ahead with any of the work.

MARTIN GARDNER

Above: Sat on a dramatic peninsula in West Wales, overlooking the Irish Sea, this project by Hyde + Hyde was an ideal candidate for dramatic glazing. A recessed curtain track in the ceiling adds practicality while preserving a sleek look

preserve a continuous insulation line within the wall thickness to avoid thermal breaks and heat loss.

It's also important to consider access when it comes to fitting and installing large panes – particularly for tight plots and urban properties. The bigger you go, the heavier and more complex the glass becomes, which makes installation more challenging. If the only access to the rear of a renovation project is through the house, for instance, you will be limited by what you can fit through a standard doorway. If you have a path or gate at the back of your property, then you'll have more flexibility and may be able to opt for slightly larger windows.

Practical considerations

From within the home, a picture window should contribute to an inviting year-round space. A key step is preventing excess heat gain. "We do often recommend solar control glass, which reduces UV and heat transmission," says Matt. That way, you can still get plenty of natural light without the room turning into a greenhouse. For more dynamic control, external shading – like an overhanging roof, fixed slatted screens or even integrated solar panels – can help moderate the sun's impact.

Another critical factor is how daylight is distributed throughout the room. "There's often a temptation to install one very large window, but that can make the front of the space extremely bright while leaving the back in relative darkness," says Alan. This can make a room feel smaller or gloomier than it really is. The skill lies in planning windows of an appropriate size and positioning them thoughtfully, so that light is dispersed evenly throughout.

Consider the views looking in, too. If you're in the middle of the countryside, then maybe you're okay with a low-set picture window in the bathroom, so you can soak up the landscape from the tub. But if the glazing faces a street or neighbouring property, privacy is a key factor. "Internal solutions like discreet roller blinds or automated systems are great solutions," says Matt. This could also inform where you choose to locate your windows.

CONTACTS

21 Degrees 080 8281 5021 www.21degrees.com **Bison Frames** 0800 138 3838 www.bisonframes.co.uk **Eco Design Consultants** 01908 886854 www.ecodesignconsultants.co.uk **Hyde + Hyde Architects** 072922 800 818 www.hydearchitects.com **IDSystems** 01603 408804 www.idsystems.co.uk **Internorm** 020 8205 9991 uk.internorm.com **Kloeber** 01487 740044 www.kloeber.co.uk **Met Therm Windows** 01730 202205 www.metthermwindows.co.uk **Norrsken** 01202 632777 www.norrsken.co.uk **TP Improvements** 01372 203040 www.tpimprovements.com

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Sustainable BUILDING

Choosing to build sustainably starts with selecting the right construction method. Here, we explore what makes a property eco-friendly and highlight the systems that could help you create a greener home

Above: Jamie and Sonia Hockaday chose Oakwrights to create their new oak frame family home. The build features renewable materials, MVHR, air source heating, and high-performance insulation throughout

Right: A SIPs house shell being erected on site. The SIPS@Clays build features insulated splines to provide full insulation coverage and to minimise thermal bridging

Sustainability has become a buzzword in the construction industry – but it carries real weight when used meaningfully. Creating a greener home involves using resources efficiently, minimising environmental damage and creating houses that are low-energy, functional, beautiful and healthy, as well as responsible in their impact on the planet. Your structural choices play a role in the core equation – so how do different systems compare?

What is sustainable construction?

Creating a truly eco-friendly home starts with a fabric-first approach. This means prioritising the insulation and airtightness levels of the building's structural envelope to reduce energy demand in use (and thus lower carbon emissions over the property's lifetime). But you can dive deeper by scrutinising the embodied impact of the materials the house is built with, too (ie the carbon used to source, manufacture, transport and install them).

For ever-more efficient homes, embodied carbon is a major factor in in the eco stakes. Build methods that use low-carbon or recycled materials and reduce on-site waste can bake sustainability into your project – and all without compromising on energy performance in use. Prefabricated systems, natural materials and careful detailing can all contribute to a healthier internal environment and a more energy efficient structure.

Ultimately, sustainable construction is about finding the balance that works for you. Whether your priority is reducing your carbon footprint, cutting down on energy bills or simply living in a more natural and healthy space, there are many paths to buiding green.

Timber frame

Timber is an excellent choice for eco-conscious self builders, as it is renewable, organic and non-toxic. Panelised timber frame systems contribute to strong energy performance, delivering a highly insulated and sealed structure. "Using timber helps to ensure that the building has an airtight envelope, meaning heat doesn't escape – which has the twin advantages of helping the environment and lowering heating bills," says Simon Orrells, managing director at Frame Technologies. "Prefabricated closed panel models can even achieve U-values from 0.18 down to as low as 0.09 W/m^{2}K, leading to a very energy efficient building."

Be sure to verify that your provider's solutions use responsibly sourced wood. "Timber should always come from sustainable forests where felled trees are replaced," says Lee Broomhall, sales director at MBC Timber. Structural Timber Association (STA) Assure members are a good place to start, as these firms commit to quality standards that include responsible sourcing of timber.

A further advantage of timber frame construction is that the panels can be filled with a range of insulations. Therefore, you have the freedom to specify natural, green materials – such as hemp, recycled paper, wood fibre, sheep's wool and straw – to fulfil your sustainability goals.

Oak frame

Oak frame construction offers significant environmental benefits with its energy-efficient design potential. "We take a fabric first approach to the process, aiming to ensure our finished homes will score an EPC rating of A," says Julian Pilkington, senior oak frame designer at Oakwrights. Oak builds are encapsulated with panelised systems which provide modern thermal performance.

By focusing on the building envelope during the design process, before making decisions on extra renewable technologies, you can ensure long-term efficiency and reduce reliance on additional energy sources.

Oak is also a low-impact material. "Similarly to timber, it compares favourably to other building materials – such

as steel and concrete – because of its ability to sequester carbon, effectively locking it in and offsetting your build's overall CO2 footprint of a project," says Dan Wilson, project consultant at Carpenter Oak. A recent Oakwrights home sequestered an estimated 63.3 tonnes of carbon through the use of natural and recycled building materials.

Structural insulated panels

Structural insulated panels (SIPs) is a prefabricated, high-performance building system that can be used to create walls, roofs and floors. The panels consist of an insulated foam core – typically expanded or extruded polystyrene – which is sandwiched between two boards. The needs to be a type of plastic (and therefore oil-based) but SIPs offers sustainability benefits across the build process and property's lifecycle. What's more, many suppliers are innovating to minimise embodied carbon: for instance, Bio-SIP's panels feature recycled post-consumer waste (plastic bottles) for the insulating core.

Like other timber building systems, one of the key sustainability benefits of SIPs is that it is manufactured under factory conditions. These offsite construction methods significantly speed up on-site assembly and greatly reduce the number of vehicle trips required, further lowering the environmental impact.

Once built, SIPs contributes to a property's efficiency and helps to reduce energy consumption. "Airtightness levels in a SIPs house are typically between 1 to 1.5 air changes per hour compared to between 3 and 5 per hour for traditional builds such as blockwork," says Derek McIntyre, SIPs director at JML SIPs. "The built-in thermal properties of a SIPs system – reduced thermal bridging, increased airtightness and low U-values – can cut the amount of energy used to heat or cool a room by up to 50%," says Ian Clay, founding partner at SIPS@Clays.

Straw bale

When it comes to natural, low-impact building methods, straw bale is right up there. There are two main types of straw construction: loadbearing and infill. With the first, bales are stacked like bricks to support the floor, joists and roof, while the infill method uses a timber skeleton to carrying the weight of the roof and floors, with the bales providing insulation. There are also modern alternatives, such as prefabricated straw-insulated panels and compressed straw boards for internal walls and insulation.

As the bales are created from leftover stalks from the grain harvest process, which would otherwise be burnt in fields, straw bale is a great example of utilising a waste product for a better purpose. "Just 5% of the straw removed from fields in the UK every year could build 67,000 three-bed semi-detached homes every year," says Cypren Edmunds, chair of Straw Building UK.

Straw manufacturing is also a low-carbon choice. "The UK Environmental Product Declaration for straw as insulation showed that production and transport of one m^3 of straw results in 14.12 kgCO2e of embodied carbon – among the lowest of any insulation," says Cypren.

Eco blockwork

An innovative wave of low-concrete building blocks is coming through that seek to answer some of the main questions surrounding the sustainability of masonry construction. Conventional blocks have very high levels of embodied carbon, but newer options incorporate recycled content and benefit from more efficient manufacturing processes. For example, Holcim's Masterlite Pro Eco blocks reduce embodied CO2 by approximately 30% compared to standard lightweight aggregate blocks. Choosing blocks made from local materials and using precast systems with zero production waste, such as BettaBlok, can also reduce environmental impact.

Above: Husband and wife architects Steven Harris and Catherine Roberts of CRSH Architects tried out straw bale construction by building their garage-workshop with a curved wall under a large projecting roof

INSULATED CONCRETE FORMWORK (ICF)

At first glance, insulated concrete formwork, or ICF, might not seem like the most sustainable choice for a self build project. Typically, this method uses lightweight, hollow blocks or panels made from a rigid foam insulation, which are stacked to create a home's external walling. Reinforcing steels are added and concrete is then poured into the formwork to create an airtight and highly insulated building envelope. While CO2 emissions in use should be very low, the materials carry a high embodied carbon – but that could be about to change.

Birdsong, designed by Andrew Lethbridge Associates, is the first ICF build in the UK to receive the prestigious AECB CarbonLite Plaque. It has an impressive SAP rating of 111 and an Environmental Impact rating of 103. This performance was made possible by innovative construction systems and low-carbon materials.

R-Wall, which produced the ICF building envelope for Birdsong, used concrete mixes featuring secondary aggregates – a by-product of the china clay industry in Cornwall – sourced from local waste tip sites. These sites contain millions of tonnes of unused material, which significantly reduced the need for quarried stone and long-distance transport. In addition, the concrete incorporated Regen. This is a ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBS) made from iron industry by-products. Replacing just one tonne of cement with Regen dramatically cuts embodied CO2 by around 900kg.

Its eco credentials don't just stop there. The rails and ties that hold the insulation in place were also derived from recycled PVCu window frames.

CONTACTS

Andrew Lethbridge Associates 01548 853699 www.ala-architecture.co.uk **Bettablok** 01487 842880 www.bettablok.com **BioSIP** 01483 346070 www.bio-sip.co.uk **Carpenter Oak** 01803 732900 www.carpenteroak.com **CRSH Architects** 01873 853238 www.crsharchitects.co.uk **Ecobrix** 07429 410694 www.ecobrix.co.uk **Frame Technologies** 01544 267124 www.frametechnologies.co.uk **JML SIPs** 01764 663271 www.jmlsips.co.uk **Holmcim** 01530 816600 www.holcim.co.uk **MBC Timber Frame** 01452 346499 www.mbctimberframe.co.uk **Oakwrights** 01432 353353 www.oakwrights.co.uk **R-Wall** 01288 377337 www.r-wall.co.uk **SIPs@Clays** 01756 79498 www.clays.com **Straw Building UK** www.strawbuildinguk.org

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PLANNING YOUR SMART LIGHTING

This tech is much more than controlling brightness on your smartphone – it's about layering scenes, boosting wellbeing and enhancing your living spaces, says Emily Batesmith

Before taking on a major home project, you might have paid little attention to the options surrounding your home's artificial lighting. Yes, you've been opting for energy efficient bulbs and dimmer switches have long allowed for brightness control, but smart lighting takes things much further. A well-planned install allows you to create preset moods that respond directly to how you want to use your rooms at different times of day and through the seasons.

Smart lighting can be controlled from the lightswitch, but also from your phone or even voice activation – plus it can be automated so that it works in the background without any thought from you. "You can create or adjust your "scenes", such as movie night, cooking or evening unwind, at any time," says Simon Johnson, country manager for Theben Automation. "It's designed to feel natural and user-friendly, not technical."

Here, I'm delving into how smart lighting works and what kinds of setup could suit your household.

What smart lighting can do

Essentially, these systems enable you to create pre-programmed scenarios that will be based around your household routine and how you want various rooms to be illuminated at different times of the day. For instance, you can tell your bathroom light to only come on at 10% brightness when you go in at 3am, or tell your living room lights to give off a soft, warm yellow light in the evenings but a more energising white hue during the daytime.

Recognise the different types of lights you have in a room and how you'd like them to be in various scenarios. "Think in layers – for example, in a dining room you would typically have a single pendant light in the middle with some picture lights on the wall, then perhaps some floor/table lamps for an interior design statement," says Nik Black, managing director at Sigma Design.

Traditionally, each of these layers would be controlled via switches on the wall, plus individual light switches on lamps. "With smart lighting, you can press a single button that recalls a scene of the layers in different proportions," says Nik. "For instance, daytime use in that dining room might have the central light at 90%, the wall/artwork lights at 70% and the lamps at 50%. The keypad could be a simple on/off button with up and down arrows so you can adjust the scene, but every time you press that button on any given day you get the same outcome."

Smart lighting can play a role in home security by scheduling it to look like someone is in when you're away or even programming a desk lamp to flash to let you know that someone's at the door. "Smart lighting can be really useful for occupancy mimicking, which is where the system will learn your behaviour, knowing that you tend to leave the house at 8am and get home at 6pm," says Nik. "Another option is to have lights linked lights to an astronomical clock." This means you can set your garden lights to always come on at dusk, adjusting automatically to timings throughout the year, and always have it turning off when you go to bed at 11pm, for instance.

Above: In this design by Brilliant Lighting, the living spaces feature layered lighting schemes that can be adjusted at the touch of a button

ISTOCK.COM/LUZA STUDIOS

Left: Designing with a mix of task, ambient and accent lighting creates a more harmonious effect, and provides flexibility for pre-set scenes

Above: It's beneficial to plan your garden lighting at the same time as the interior illumination so everything can run off the same smart system. This project is by Brilliant Lighting

Controlling your lighting

You might be thinking that smart tech means operating everything from your smartphone – and while that function is available for most lighting systems, it's unlikely to be the main way you'll be controlling things day-to-day. "The majority of people just want to walk into a room and turn on the light – there's a massive danger of over complicating these things," says Nik.

App control can be handy when you're out of the house or if you're lounging on the sofa with your phone within reach and want to adjust the settings for a change of ambience. "A system that can only be controlled by smart phones is going to be more vulnerable to issues than control that uses physical wired keypads," says Melanie Shaw, design director at Brilliant Lighting. "We design schemes with wired keypads at door entry points and wherever you would expect to find a physical light switch. It's natural, clear how it works and it beats fishing in your pocket for a phone to turn your lights on and off."

Voice assistants offer the benefit of allowing you to control things without reaching for a switch, but you'll need to remember what you've called the various layers and scenes. "You can use Amazon Alexa/Google Home to turn lights on and off, or dim and brighten certain areas and turn on your pre-programmed combinations," says Melanie. "You can alter colour and temperature, as well as issuing commands to whole rooms or areas. It's very flexible and feels natural."

WHY DOES LIGHT COLOUR MATTER?

We know that daylight is important for our wellbeing, but the tone of the artificial white light we're exposed to in our homes also impacts on us in ways we might not realise. "Light affects much more than what we see," says Simon Johnson from Theben. "The colour temperature of lighting has a big influence on health, mood, and wellbeing."

Daylight is good for us because it helps with circadian rhythm, aka our internal 24 hour clock that tells us when it's time to be awake and asleep. The whiter a light, the bluer the hue – this mimics our experience of when the sun is high in the sky, boosting energy, attention and mood. However, if you're exposed to lots of blue light just before bed, these benefits turn into negatives, making it more difficult to enjoy a restful sleep. This is why you often hear about the need to reduce screen time late into the evening.

It's best to have cool white light in the day to support activity and more orangey white in the evening, mimicking dusk or the warm glow of the fire from our caveman days. "Systems using circadian or tuneable white lighting can automatically adjust throughout the day to support your natural rhythm, promoting better sleep, productivity, and overall wellbeing," says Simon.

Setup – wired or wireless

If you're building a new house or taking on a major renovation, a wired setup will be the most robust. "Your smart lighting is centrally controlled with what's like a brain operating multiple circuits as part of a scene," says Andy Moss from Moss Technical. "As an example, I've just added six lighting circuits in my ensuite, all centrally controlled. It includes: shadow gap lighting around the ceiling; niche lighting for the showers and soap; mirror lights; spotlights over the basin; vanity lights; and orientation lights under the toilet."

There are plenty of smart bulbs on the DIY market, but many rely on WiFi which is an issue if your internet goes down and are more suited to one-off application. "In a self build, when you can be running a cables anyway, a wired system will probably cost you less money than a wireless one and will be 100 times more reliable," says Nik.

That said, hard-wiring isn't always straightforward in a retrofit. In such cases, professional RF (radio frequency) lighting systems such as LUXORLiving Smart Start offer a high-quality, secure alternative that won't drop out when the WiFi goes down. "Both options deliver the same intuitive experience – smart, sustainable comfort that fits your project's stage and budget," says Simon."

How much does smart lighting cost?

It's difficult to give an average figure for a smart lighting install, as so much depends on your property and the level of control you're after. A whole-house system might cost into the £10,000s; but it will be controlling multiple circuits with reduced cabling – so the infrastructure and hardware might not cost much more than standard electrics. It's the fittings and functionality you choose that will make the biggest difference to the price.

"It's worth remembering that, to get the best out of a smart lighting control system, you really need an excellent lighting design," says Melanie. "Simply adding smart control to a boring array of lights is not going to magically transform what they look like when you turn them on. Many of the homeowners we work with spend as much with us on design, fittings and control as they do on their kitchen or their windows and doors."

CONTACTS

Brilliant Lighting 01845 525664 www.brilliantlighting.co.uk **Moss Technical** 01656 746766 www.mosstech.co.uk **Theben** www.luxorliving.co.uk **Sigma Design** 01392 949150 www.sigma-design.co.uk

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Radiator upgrades

should you replace or refurb?

Could old radiators be driving up bills and compromising comfort? Serial renovator Kate Sandhu reveals the smartest upgrade routes – and what to budget

Right: Made in Olycal stone and hand-painted, Dune by Cinear is both artwork and modern radiator. With a rated output of 6,278 BTUs (1,840W), the central heating version features a core of heavy copper tubes, while the panel's large surface area allows for low-temperature heating. From £6,585, The Radiator Centre (theradiatorcentre.com)

Below: Available in horizontal and vertical styles, the Milano Windsor from Best Heating (bestheating.com) is a triple-column radiator ideal for achieving a classic look. This 600mm (H) x 1,190mm (W) versions can deliver 5,055 BTUs (1,481W) of heat in a typical boiler-fed system

When planning a renovation or new heating system, the humble radiator is often an afterthought. Yet upgrading or refurbishing them can boost efficiency, cut bills, add a stylish statement and prepare your home for low-carbon heating technologies. Whether you're restoring beautiful old cast-iron models, replacing dated panels or simply planning for the future, thoughtful radiator choices will pay you back in looks, performance and day-to-day comfort. So, does it make sense to upgrade or are you better off refurbishing or retaining what you already have? Here's what to consider before you commit.

When to upgrade

Radiators are rarely the stars of a renovation, but they play a vital supporting role. If you're renovating and already intend to upgrade insulation, windows or your heating system, then emitters should form part of the overall strategy. Replacements don't come cheap, though – so how do you know when to upgrade? Signs that your radiators are reaching the end of their useful life include:

- Visible wear, corrosion or even leaks from the existing panels.
- Cold spots on the surface or long warm-up times.
- Frequent air build-up (listen for tell-tale gurgling noises) that won't clear by bleeding.
- You're running tired single-panel units that struggle to heat rooms evenly.

In older homes, the original pipework might also be undersized or sludged up, affecting performance across the system. Or perhaps you've extended your home or changed the size of some rooms? Your boiler system and radiators can only work efficiently if they're correctly sized to provide the right output for the space.

Note that heat pumps operate at lower flow temperatures than boilers – so if you're thinking of switching, it's essential to review your radiator system. They need to be sufficiently large (or high output) to efficiently deliver the comfort temperatures you're expecting. Even if you're not planning to ditch the boiler for now, a major renovation could be a good opportunity to upgrade to modern pipework and potentially change some of the radiators, futureproofing your home and making it heat pump ready.

Benefits of modern radiators

Today's radiators can be both beautiful and functional – with plenty of choice in terms of the materials, forms, finishes and performance characteristics on offer. Prices vary to match the specification – and note they can really escalate at the luxury end of the market.

Performance: Modern, high-efficiency designs can deliver the same output at lower water temperatures compared to conventional radiators. This enables your central heating system to work more efficiently, reduce running costs and complement low-carbon technologies like heat pumps. Features such as double or triple panels, convector fins (the zig-zag strips sitting behind the front panel that increase surface area) and advanced column design enhance your emitters' performance.

Materials: It's all about choosing the right solution for your requirements. Aluminium radiators, for instance, heat up and cool down quickly – ideal for responsiveness. Steel versions are typically durable, efficient and available in countless shapes and sizes; while cast-iron units are less responsive but retain heat well and add period charm.

Style: We've come a long way from the plain white rectangles of old. Sleek vertical models free up wall space; low-profile versions tuck neatly beneath windows; and designer radiators double as sculptural features. Coloured or textured finishes can turn an otherwise practical fixture into a style asset.

Efficiency & comfort: Upgrading radiators offers an opportunity to rebalance your heating system. Properly sized, well-positioned units ensure each room in your home warms evenly, helping to eliminate draughty cold spots and reduce wasted energy.

When to keep & refurbish

Not every upgrade needs to start from scratch. If you have high-quality period radiators, these can often be refurbished. Cast-iron column designs, in particular, are built to last – so consider having them stripped, repainted and internally flushed to restore their performance.

Don't assume you need to change every radiator if you're adding insulation or moving to a heat pump – some of the existing emitters may still be suitable. Your heating engineer can calculate the required outputs at lower flow temperatures and advise on whether the current radiators will suffice or, if not, how many need upgrading. One option is to move panels between different rooms to minimise the number of replacements required. This not only saves money but also reduces waste and – in the case of a period property – could preserve character.

Moving existing radiators can also be worthwhile if your renovation alters room layouts. Traditionally, the windows were the coldest part of a room – hence radiators were positioned directly beneath them, to warm cold draughts and encourage heat circulation. If you're installing double or triple glazing, the window won't be as much of a cold spot, giving added flexibility for radiator placement.

Plumbing infrastructure

When budgeting for radiator work, consider the condition of the pipework behind the scenes. Old or corroded pipes can restrict water flow and affect system balance. Some types of microbore pipe (narrow copper or plastic tubes popularised in the 1970s and 80s) struggle to deliver sufficient flow in low flow temperature heating systems – you may need to consider stripping out and replumbing.

If you're lifting floors as part of a wider renovation project, then it's well worth assessing whether to replace the pipework at the same time. Doing so while access is easy will be far cheaper than retrofitting later. Expect to spend from around £300–£500 per room for new copper runs, depending on complexity.

Heating controls

Good controls are what separate an efficient system from an inefficient one, so be sure to look at modernising them alongside your radiator upgrade. This way, you'll enjoy the best possible performance from day one.

Thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) allow individual room adjustment, preventing energy waste in spaces that don't need constant heating. Upgrading to modern, liquid-sensor TRVs can improve responsiveness and accuracy – and you can even get smart versions. TRVs can also be a style statement themselves, with different materials and colourways to match any.

A single central thermostat and programmer is better than nothing but zoned smart controls can take efficiency further – particularly in larger homes. They don't always deliver the miraculous savings manufacturers claim but can help optimise comfort by learning usage patterns and preventing overheating. For most households, modest but worthwhile energy savings are achievable, especially when paired with upgraded radiators.

WHAT TO BUDGET

Radiator projects vary widely in cost, depending on factors such as the size of your home, insulation values, and the nature of the emitters required – will there be more of them, do you need larger models etc? Here's a general guide to what to expect in your quotes:

Item	Typical cost (per item or project)
Basic radiator replacement (like-for-like)	**£150–£300**
Designer radiator	**£250–£800+**
Whole-house upgrade (8–10 radiators)	**£1,500–£3,000**
Refurbishing cast iron radiator	**£150–£300 each**
Upgrading controls (TRVs, thermostats)	**£30–£200 per room**
Replacing old pipework	**£300–£500 per room**

Remember to budget for system flushing, which will typically cost you £400-£600 for a full house. This oft-neglected step will help prevent sludge build-up and protects your investment.

Left: The Wiser smart radiator thermostat (wiser.draytoncontrols.co.uk) fits onto most existing valves to give you independent, room-by-room control. Pair wirelessly with the Wiser Hub to manage your heating from anywhere via a dedicated app

Who should do the work?

While swapping out a single radiator can be a DIY-friendly job, anything more involved – like resizing, rebalancing or rerouting pipework – is best done by a qualified heating engineer or plumber. A professional will calculate sizes and outputs for you, check pressures, balance the system and ensure everything operates safely and efficiently.

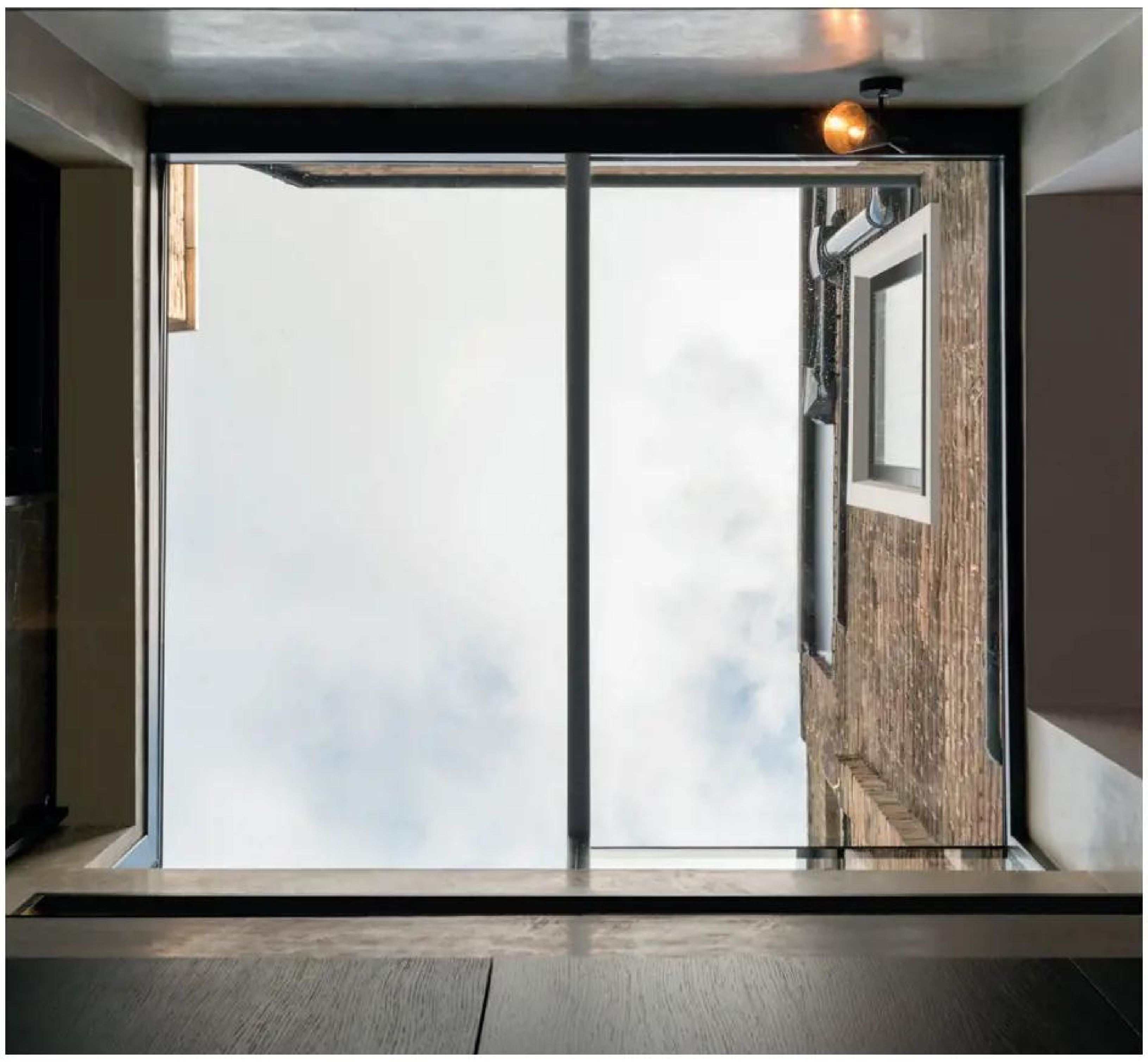
Always check your installer's credentials – especially if you're undertaking a full system upgrade or integrating a heat pump. Accreditations include Gas Safe for working with gas boilers and MCS (Microgeneration Certification Scheme) for renewable appliances.

Left: The Radiator Centre's Strada Hybrid, from £602, is a fan-assisted radiator primarily aimed at low-temperature heat pump systems. A boost mode increases outputs by 20-25% to reach desired room temperatures quicker. Outputs range from 3,217 to 36,682 BTUs (943 to 10,751W) depending on size

USING ROOFLIGHTS EFFECTIVELY

Architect **Julian Owen** explores the different ways you can brighten your home with overhead glazing, and the key factors to note for a successful setup

Above: Who says a rooflight has to be rectangular? This made-to-measure aluminium fixed circular design by Eos Rooflights adds a stunning contemporary look (eosrooflights.co.uk)



Right: Automated glazing, like this sliding rooflight made by IQ Glass, is becoming more common as the mechanisms become discreet enough to use in domestic projects (iqglassuk.com)

High levels of daylight will make almost any room in a home feel more peaceful and relaxing. It's a free gift from nature that goes a long way to help your design achieve that elusive wow factor because, when skilfully deployed in a space, it can make a potentially ordinary area feel a little more special. It also offers mental health benefits, helping to regulate our sleep patterns by boosting light levels to help us wake up in the morning. It can help those who suffer from the effects of seasonal affective disorder (SADs), which is triggered by the lack of sun in the winter seasons. Not to mention, natural light can reduce electricity bills as there's less need for artificial illumination. So, how can they be implemented into a home's design for maximum impact?

Designing for daylight

The quality and effect of sunlight can be made more pleasing if it enters the room from a variety of directions, for example by placing windows on two or more sides, and especially in the ceiling. This has a fairly subtle but measurable effect on a person's subconscious. It's where toplight has an important role to play, especially if the location of the windows is partially restricted for practical reasons. What's more, overhead glazing typically lets in at least three times as much light compared to a side window, which is mostly reflected from the ground or the surrounding buildings and landscape.

Ventilation & passive cooling

Another benefit of rooflights is that they help circulate fresh air around the house. Modern designs include trickle vents that can be left open, providing constant airflow to help manage internal humidity and comfort levels throughout the seasons. On very hot days, ideally all the windows in a house should be kept shut once the temperature of the outside air is higher than inside. During the cooler evening it is important to get the air circulating as quickly as possible and rooflights can be thrown fully open to create a strong updraft – providing passive cooling by purging old, hot air.

Rooflights are readily available for both flat and pitched roofs and any reasonable opportunity to add them should be taken up, but the effect of the sun should be fully considered, because it has mixed benefits. Too many south-facing rooflights will cause glare and overheating, which even blinds are unable to eliminate completely. If they are on the north side of the house, they will get less sun but can let some in that doesn't reach standard windows. North light from the roof is much prized by artists for its consistency and quality, and will make a room bright without allowing sunlight to fall on an easel, desk or computer screen.

The contrast between a rooflight and the ceiling can be dazzling in sunny conditions. This light can be diffused and softened by splaying the edges of the surrounding frames.

Choosing the ideal position

Opening up the underside of the roof at the top of a stairwell, and including some large roof windows, is an excellent way to add a bit of drama. It floods daylight all the way down to the ground floor and can have a spectacular effect on the feel of the house, especially as people enter through the front door.

One opportunity that is often missed is when a simple first floor extension is being designed. By opening out the ceiling to expose the roof and adding rooflights, a standard bedroom can be transformed at no great expense.

If you're building a ground floor extension it's almost a crime not to add rooflights and make use of their benefits. Try to locate them close to the main external walls to reduce the risk of the areas at the back of the existing rooms becoming gloomy. Watch out for the potential loss of privacy if the roof is overlooked by a neighbour's first floor windows. You can combat this by specifying frosted glazing where needed.

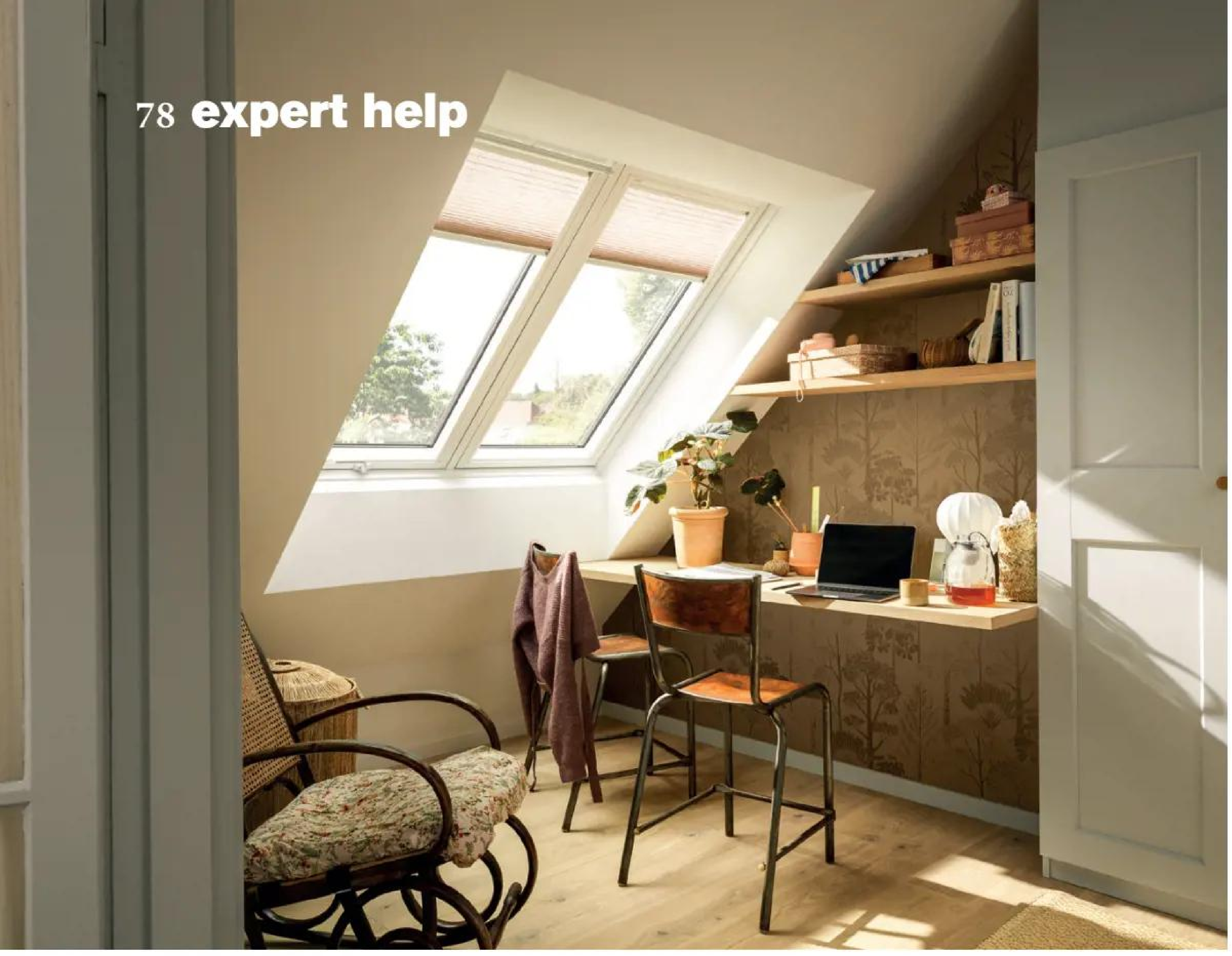
If you have an area in the middle of the house where there is no chance to fit windows, perhaps because the walls are on a boundary, or the plan is very deep, it is possible to fit a rooflight at a higher level and use a lightpipe or sunpipe to extend down through the floors above to a glazed panel set into the ceiling. These are flexible tubes lined with highly reflective plastic that bounces the light from the top end to the bottom. They are not suitable on their own for any rooms that need ventilation, and not a great deal of help where a space is just a bit gloomy. But a lightpipe can be extremely useful in areas such as a ground floor WC, hall or landing if there is no daylight at all. If the pipe is large (typically 250mm or more), its route must be carefully planned to avoid any problems it might encounter as it threads its way through the floors above.

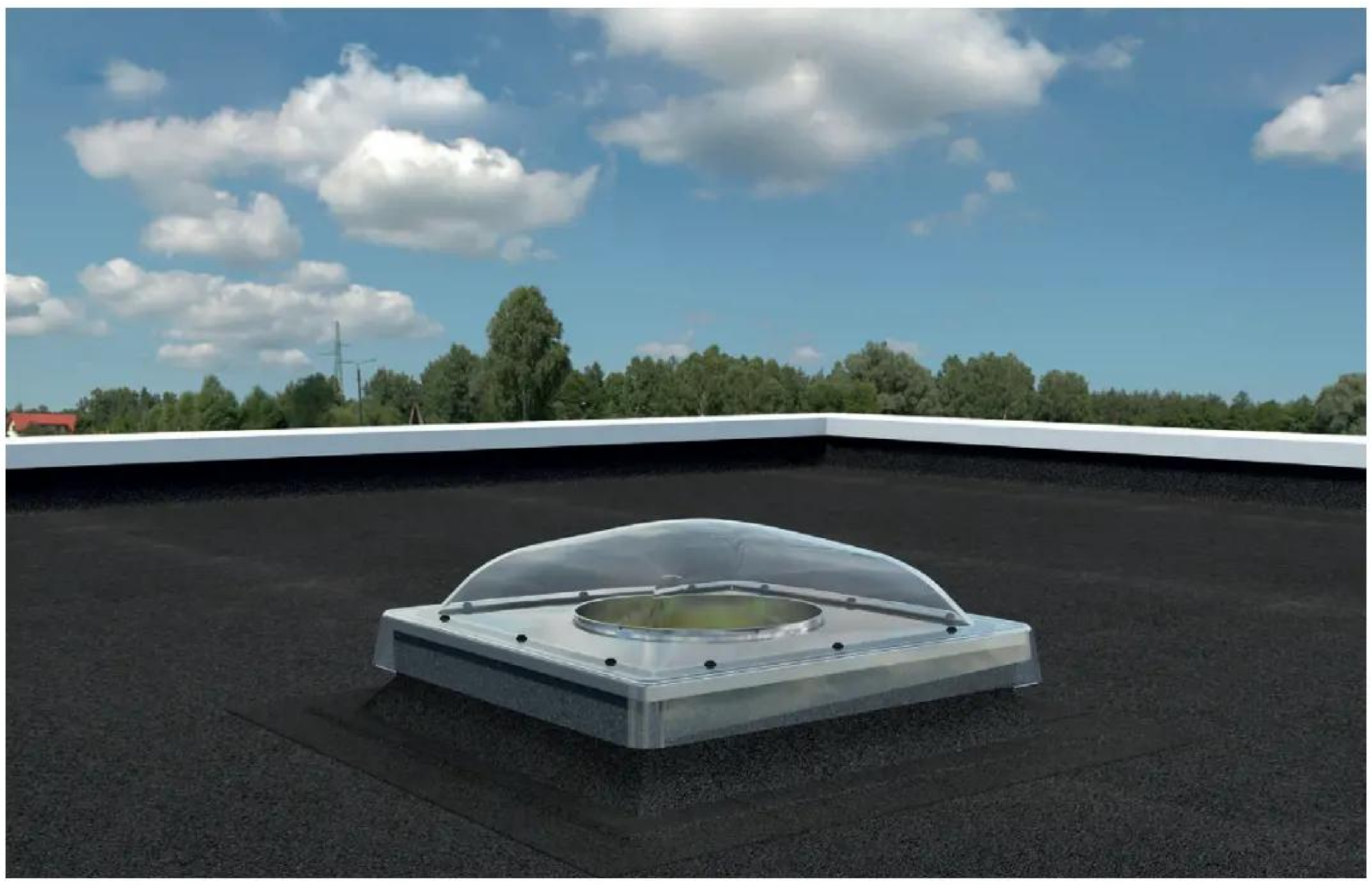
Loft space glazing

Rooflights not only bring light to lofts, but can also help to get around some tricky space planning problems – especially where you have to squeeze in as much useable

Above: This timeless extension design features a timber roof lantern from Just Roof Lanterns, filling the entire room with daylight and providing an impressive feature (justroof lanterns.co.uk)

Left: Kloeber's bespoke aluminium flat rooflights complement a range of flat roof coverings - from high-performance felt through to the likes of lead, zinc and single ply membranes. They can also be double or triple glazed to ensure maximum energy efficiency (kloeber.co.uk)





ROOF WINDOW OPTIONS

If we are talking about terminology, rooflights stand proud of the top of the roofline and skylights are in line with it. In the real world, most people tend to use rooflight when talking about both types of overhead glazing, as I have done in this article.

Rooflights which are fitted to sloping roofs are typically centre pivot so that they can be spun around inside out for cleaning. However, there are alternatives to suit different requirements. If they are hinged at the top with friction keeping them open, they can be used as an escape route in the event of a fire. If the roof slope is very shallow, special versions are needed to avoid leaks. So, if the pitch is below about 20° the specification should be checked to ensure it will be suitable.

All the good quality models have secure locking systems as standard, but some are better than others, so it's worth checking this before ordering. Alternatively, you can choose a fixed version that doesn't open - this will also be quite a bit cheaper.

If a window needs to be opened but is out of reach, there are a few options. One method is to use a pole, which is a great stretching exercise, but if they are too high or heavy they will have to be motorised, (along with blinds, if you want them). Larger flat rooflights can also be electrically operated to gently slide open in good weather.

In locations with heritage protections in place, or if you live in a listed building, conservation rooflights may be required by the council. These usually have dark frames that are recessed into the roofline with a design featuring long, thin strips of glazing – hinting that large glass panes used to be costly.

Top: Modular windows, featuring multiple units, can be a boon for the right project. This 2-in-1 rooflight by Velux has one fixed and one openable pane, providing ventilation and ample natural light (velux.co.uk)

Above: When there is no opportunity to install roof or vertical windows to provide natural light, a light tunnel is an effective solution. This system by Fakro can be easily added onto a south-facing roof to ensure you draw in maximum levels of sunlight (fakro.co.uk)

room as possible and a few centimetres could be the difference between success and failure. For example, the Building Regulations require a minimum headroom over a staircase and if you can't quite achieve this where it lands in the attic, the inspector may not pass the design. The right type and size of rooflight, inset into the roof at the top of the stairs, will add up to 230mm of clearance and may then satisfy the building inspector. I once hit a problem designing a very small bedroom in a side attic which was just about big enough for a single bed. The challenge was that the door into the space would have hit the slope of the ceiling, preventing it from opening fully. The careful positioning of a rooflight eliminated the issue.

If you have a problem with the maintenance and cleaning of valleys on the roof, which are often difficult to reach, adding a rooflight to the loft in the right place will allow you to reach out from it to clear away any leaves or debris. This will reduce the risks associated with having to clamber out to access the valleys and putting yourself into a potentially dangerous situation.

Optimising your home's interior layout

When your plans are being prepared, make sure that the likely furniture setups are shown so that the location of the rooflights can be coordinated. This will make sure that the overhead glazing works in harmony with the interior design. The most obvious example of how essential this is, is when you are fitting a glazed lantern (which looks a bit like a small greenhouse) on a flat roof. They are a spectacular architectural feature but have a very powerful effect on what happens below. The only location that looks right for a table is when it is squarely under it, lining up with its centre point. The same is true if you are arranging sofas, coffee tables and armchairs around the lantern. If you want to keep your options open, spread out smaller units across the roof area. You might put these in groups, although they don't have to be arranged symmetrically, as they look much neater from the inside if they line through with the precise window locations.

JULIAN OWEN

Julian Owen is an East Midlands-based chartered architect and author of several books on self build and house alterations. His publications include Self Build, Home Extension Design and Kit and Modern Timber Frame Homes. He's also the founder of the ASBA Architects network. To find out more visit www.asba-architects.org.

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Do I need planning permission for my renovation?

Before starting your project, it's crucial to understand whether or not you need to apply for planning permission. **Julia Riddle** explores how to navigate the process

Above & inset: Having decided to enlarge the orangery after the original plans were submitted, Build It readers Jane and Andy Hearn exceeded PD limits and had to seek planning permission. "In hindsight, it is best to sit down with your planning officer before you commit pen to paper so you can gauge what designs are possible," says Jane

Whether your renovation includes a loft conversion, a single-storey kitchen extension, or a new bathroom, it is always worth checking if you need any sort of permission before you start the works. Permitted development (PD) rights allow for works to a residential property without formal planning permission, but what is allowed can vary depending on the type of property, its location and if there are any local restrictions.

Permitted development rights

There are many different occasions and circumstances where renovation projects may fall under permitted development rights. The provisions can offer significant opportunities for upgrades and improvements to be undertaken to your home, without the uncertainty of going through a potentially lengthy planning application.

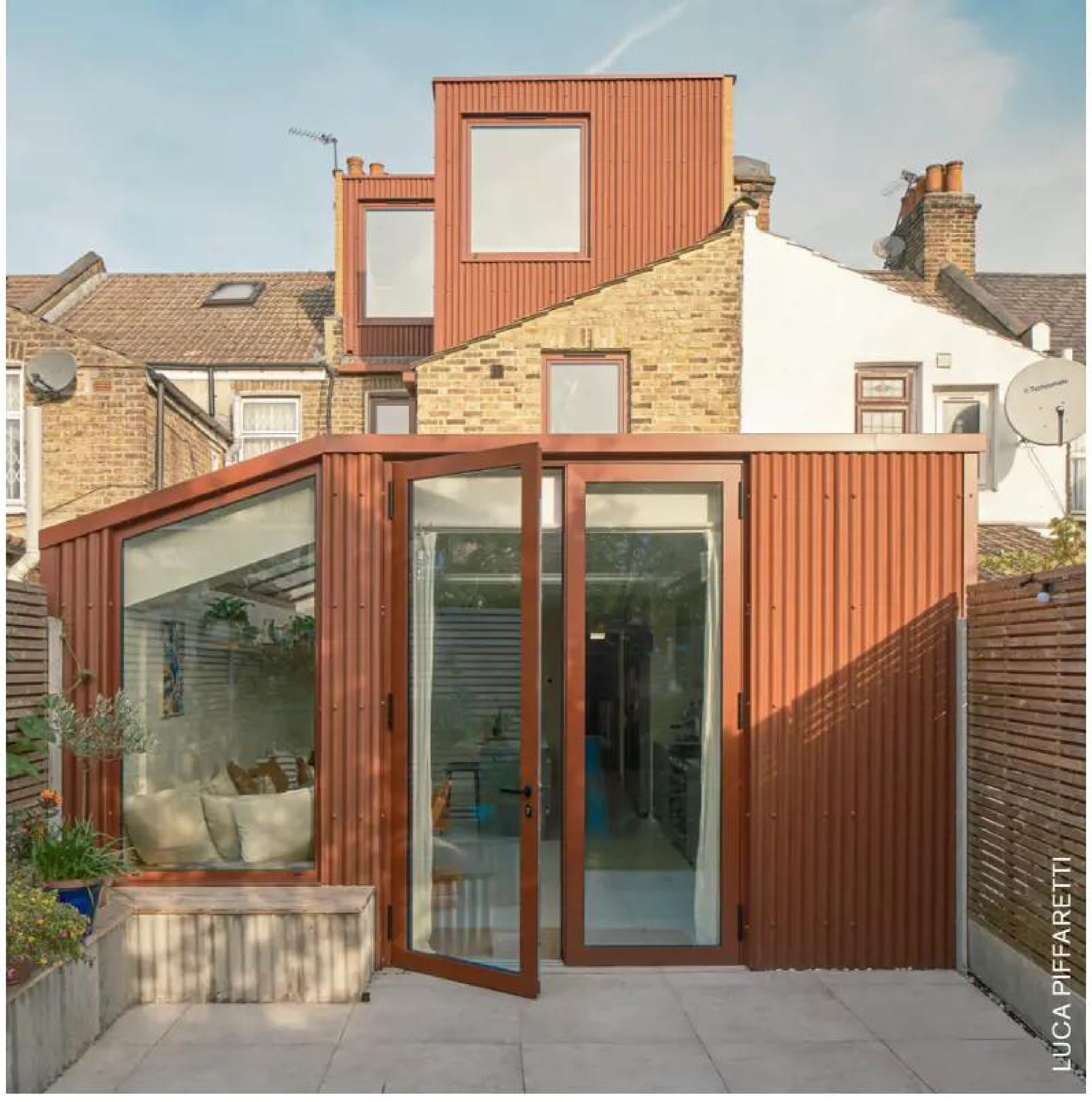
Generally, if you want to alter the interior of a property – moving or taking out walls, upgrading a bathroom, replacing a kitchen, repainting or redecorating – these types of works which won't require planning permission. Where PD rights really come into play is if you want to alter the exterior of your property in some way.

If you do have PD rights, however, there is lots of potential for your refurbishment using this approach. One of the most significant areas is extensions. For instance, you can build both ground and first floor additions without planning consent, up to certain predefined sizes. You could also double-up, building a large single-storey rear extension, perhaps with a more modest first floor addition on top. If you wanted the depth of the two zones to be equal, however, you might need planning permission to achieve this. Another option is to create a single-storey extension to the side of your home, up to half the width of the original house, subject to the distance from the boundary of the site.

When you need planning permission

There are some circumstances where you may need certain permissions, even for very minor or internal changes. If your property has heritage value, the rules will generally be more strict. If it is a listed building, you will always need listed building consent (LBC) for any works, internal or external. Likewise, if your house is newly permitted and not completed, don't assume you can start making changes to the layout - you'll need to update the original drawings and apply for an amendment to the approved plans.

If you're looking to make use of PD rights, you will need to check whether or not these have been removed


LUCA PIFFARETTI

Above left: Mike Tuck Studio (www.miketuck.co.uk) incorporated red corrugated cement board facades to this loft conversion and extension, which fulfilled the permitted development requirements to match the roof tiles of the existing dormer extension

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There are many occasions where works to enhance and renovate your property will fall under permitted development rights, but do always seek professional confirmation to save uncertainty and stress later.
- Generally, works to the inside of the property are allowed under PD – except where the building is of heritage value. If you live in a listed building, you will always need listed building consent for any works.
- Be aware that permitted development rights may have been used up or removed. In which case you will need to seek formal planning permission for the works you intend to do. Even where they are not, it is advisable to seek a certificate of lawfulness from the council to confirm your works are lawful and do not or did not require planning permission.

or previously used up. If they have, you'll likely require formal consent for your project instead. Also remember that, even when you do have them, they relate to the original house – ie you can't extend on a previous extension. Likewise, they won't apply where a property has been converted from a previous use in the past – for example, if the property was a result of a barn or commercial conversion you should assume that you need to apply for full planning approval.

Loft conversions & rear facing works

In a detached home, under PD you can convert up to 50m³ of loft space (less in a semi or terraced house) for habitable use, such as an en suite bedroom. You may also be able to include a dormer as part of this, to the rear of the property. In most cases, you can also install rooflights without permission.

As a rule, PD allows more flexibility for works at the back of a property than to the front. Outbuildings, for example, are allowed, but only if they are located to the rear of your home, on garden land that is within the curtilage of the dwelling. If you want to add a garden building to the front, you'll need full planning permission.

Your renovation plans might include laying an area of decking to enhance the garden zone. This does not require planning permission as long as it's no more than 30cm above the ground and (alongside extensions, outbuildings etc) covers no more than 50% of the garden area. You can also replace garden walls and fences provided that they will be no more than 2m in height (or up to 1m next to the highway).

Changing the external appearance

When you are undertaking a renovation project, you may be thinking about the other works you could undertake to improve the look of your home. These might include, recladding or changing existing window frames and window openings, for example. Generally, you are able to reclad or reface a property without the need for full planning permission, provided that the materials you are looking to use are similar to the existing or are generally in keeping with the aesthetic of the local area.

There is no firm definition of what constitutes something being similar. Whether your proposed change is acceptable is therefore a matter of local interpretation and may depend on how sensitive the area is in terms of character and visual appearance. For example, in a location where the look and materiality of houses is quite varied, there might be more scope for change than in an area where the houses all look alike. This can be the case where there are local heritage considerations, particularly if your property is in a conservation area, where it's best to assume that you'll need permission.

Windows can usually be replaced like for like, but always check what is allowed if you are planning on putting in new openings. Also, assume that any new doors will need planning permission. If you are replacing bay windows to the front of your property, you will also need approval before you start making any changes.

Certificates & final checks

As I have mentioned, there are many circumstances in which you can make considerable changes and enhancements to your home through PD, without the need for planning permission. Even when you have these rights, it is always advisable to seek a certificate of lawfulness from the council to confirm that the works you intend to carry out are acceptable and don't need permission. This is particularly useful if you come to sell your property, as you will most likely be asked to prove the lawfulness of any previous changes made.

If you are not sure whether the renovation works you are looking to do fall under PD, your designer or a planning consultant will be able to guide you. The local council can also advise you on whether there is a reason PD may no longer apply to your property. This might be where they have been used up through previous works and extensions, or where the rights have been removed by the council through an Article 4 Direction. In this circumstance, even for renovation works which might otherwise fall within the scale and scope of PD, you will need to apply for planning permission for your project.

JULIA RIDDLE

Julia Riddle is a planning consultant with experience in advising on a range of commercial and residential development. She runs Castle Planning (www.castleplanning.uk) and has written guidance to inform the national approach to Custom and Self Build and is a member of the Right to Build Task Force.

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Self build mortgages

Trying to work out the best way to finance your project? Scarlett Deamer speaks to experts about the funding options available and common mistakes to avoid

Building your own home is an exciting way to create a truly unique space, but it's not a route that's well understood but high street banks. Instead, you'll want to partner with specialists to get the right finance in place for your project. Unlike a standard mortgage, where the full loan is released at once, self build mortgages release funds in stages as the build progresses. In this guide, we'll explain how these mortgages work, how to apply, the essential insurance and warranties you'll need, and what to watch out for.

What is a self build mortgage?

Dedicated self build mortgages were created to overcome a key risk for lenders providing finance for a home that's yet to be constructed - namely that there's no asset for them to secure the loan against (in a standard home purchase, this would be the house itself). The solution is the stage payment mortgage, which reduces the lender's risk while also giving self builders a defined payment schedule for each phase of the work.

There are three main types of self build mortgage:

- **Guaranteed advance stage payment mortgage**
With this approach, the agreed money is released at the beginning of each stage, before the works start. This is great for cashflow and ideal for offsite systems such as timber frame, where you need an upfront payment.
- **Guaranteed arrears stage payment mortgage**
Pre-agreed funds are released after each completed stage, without the stage payment amount being affected by any interim valuations. So, you pay for works upfront but know exactly how much money will be coming in.
- **Valuation-based arrears mortgage**
Funds are released after each stage, but only if a valuer confirms that the property's value has increased. It's a well-trodden finance route, but there can be pressure on cashflow if the valuation doesn't match what you've paid.

Applying for a self build mortgage

As with any mortgage, to get the best deal, you'll need to demonstrate your financial stability – including proof of income and a good credit history. However, due to the nature of a self build mortgage, lenders may also require you to provide additional information about your home. "Most lenders will want to see ownership details, architectural plans, a structural warranty and a full cost breakdown for the entire build," says Paul Blaking, direct mortgages manager at Suffolk Building Society.

A deposit of around 25% of the total project costs is also required, but there are some lenders who can offer you up to 95% of the land and building costs, so it certainly pays to have a look around at the best possible deal for you.

Getting organised early, with a clear project plan and a good understanding of what lenders expect, will give you the best chance of securing the right mortgage.

Insurance & warranties

When securing a self build mortgage, getting the right insurance and warranties is essential – not just for your peace of mind, but also to meet lender requirements.

"Standard home insurance won't provide the cover you need for a self build," says Paul. Most lenders will want you to have self build site insurance in place before they'll release funds. This protects the building works, materials and site against risks such as fire, vandalism, flood and theft. It usually includes public liability insurance, which covers you if someone is injured on site or if property is damaged. If you're hiring tradespeople you may need employers' liability insurance, which is sometimes included in site insurance, but can also be added separately.

Another key requirement to have in place is a structural warranty. This typically lasts for 10 years and offers long-term protection against latent defects, caused by faults in the design, materials or workmanship. "Alternatively, some lenders may accept a professional consultant's certificate (PCC) issued by a suitably qualified architect. These protections safeguard both the lender's investment and your own finanaces," says Tom McSherry, national business development manager at BuildStore.

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Common mistakes

When securing this type of mortgage, seemingly minor mistakes early on can cause big delays and costs later.

One major error self builders make is underestimating their build costs. It's easy to focus on the main structure, but many people forget to budget for essentials like site access, service connections or landscaping. Professional fees are another area where costs can creep up, so be sure to factor in architects, engineers and planning fees.

WHY IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT RATES

Finding the best self build mortgage isn't just about grabbing the lowest interest rate. Unlike standard mortgages, self build versions are designed to suit the stop-start nature of constructing a house, and that means looking beyond usual mortgage options.

Specialist lenders often have a much better grasp of how these projects work. "Finding a lender that focuses on self build mortgages (compared to a high street bank, for example) can be beneficial," says Paul. They tend to be more likely to offer flexible terms, give expert advice and have a selection of products that are tailored specifically for self builders.

It's also important to think about how and when the funds are released, not just how much it's costing you in interest. Some lenders release money after each stage is completed, while others offer it upfront – which can make a huge difference to how smoothly your build runs. "Selecting the correct self build mortgage is about more than just the interest rate they offer, as the way funds are released stage by stage can make or break your project's cashflow," says Tom

Self build mortgages tend to carry higher rates of interest than standard residential mortgages. "But, it's worth remembering that with a self build mortgage, you only pay interest on the funds that have been released – which can help save you a considerable amount of money in the long run," says Paul. "The rates also vary between lenders, so it pays to do your research." Once the project is finished, you can switch to one of the lender's standard residential mortgages without any early repayment penalties.

Getting advice from a specialised broker who knows the self build market and understands your needs, will be invaluable to helping you find the best possible funding option for your bespoke project.

Another common mistake is delaying site insurance or structural warranties. These are often required before lenders release any funds, so make sure they're in place.

Don't overlook the importance of a contingency fund. "Make certain you have sufficient contingency, as lenders will want to see that you are aware that unforeseen expenses have been taken into account," says Tom.

You also don't necessarily have to sell your property to get a self build mortgage. "Lenders will allow you to remain in your current home if you have enough income or equity to support both mortgages," says Tom.

A less obvious but important point is how you fund the land purchase. Many self builders assume they need to buy the plot outright before applying for a mortgage. "Our own research revealed that two-thirds of potential self builders were unaware that some mortgage lenders will allow them to borrow on the land purchase if where planning has been granted," says Paul. This could increase your total build budget and improve cash flow.

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Self build & custom build mortgage table

Looking to fund your bespoke home project? Each month we round up the best deals from leading lenders and update you on what you need to know to secure the right finance

Advance Stage Payment Mortgages

Created by and exclusive to BuildStore, these mortgages provide guaranteed stage payments based on your costs before each phase of the build. This offers certainty in your budget and peace of mind that you can plan for and pay your bills on time.

Arrears Stage Payment Mortgages

These mortages release funds after each stage of building works is completed. To trigger the payments, a valuation must take place that shows an uplift in value. BuildStore's exclusive mortgages can offer increased borrowing of up to 85% of your costs.

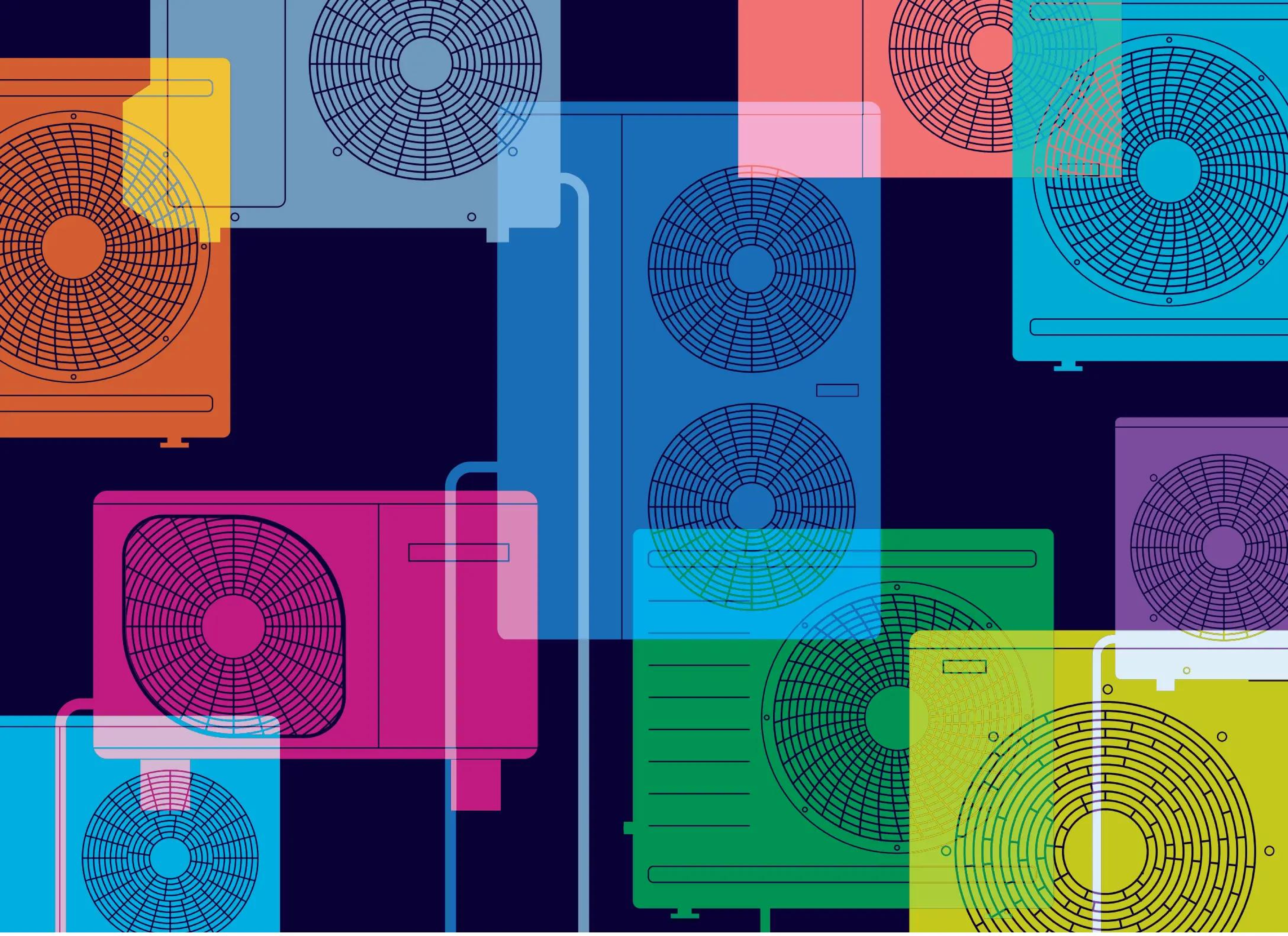
Get In Touch

For advice on funding options for your self or custom build project, speak to the experts at BuildStore by calling **0345 223 4647** or visit **www.buildstore.co.uk**

These products are chosen for illustrative purposes, and were available at the time of going to press.

KEY FOR TABLE: ★ BuildStore Exclusive Product | SB Self Build Mortgage | CB Custom Build Mortgage | LTV Loan to Value

Lender		Mortgage Type	Payment Schedule	Contact	LTV Land	LTV End Value	Interest Rate	1st Stage Payment
Chorley BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.25%	DPP & Building Regs
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.89%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.69%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.84%	DPP & Building Regs
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	5.85%	DPP & Building Regs
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.79%	DPP & Building Regs
Tipton & Coseley	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	5.70%	DPP & Building Regs
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.34%	DPP & Building Regs
Chorley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	40%	40%	5.40%	Foundations
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.49%	Foundations
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	40%	40%	5.40%	Foundations
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.59%	Foundations
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	70%	70%	5.70%	Foundations
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.60%	Foundations
Stafford Railway BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.95%	Foundations
Tipton & Coseley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	5.35%	Foundations
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.14%	Foundations
Beverley BS		SB	Arrears	01482 881510	50%	80%	5.84%	Wall Plate
Earl Shilton BS		SB	Arrears	01455 844422	75%	75%	6.14%	Flexible
Hanley Economic BS		SB & CB	Arrears	01782 255000	80%	80%	5.99%	Foundations
Melton Mowbray BS		SB	Arrears	01664 414141	n/a	75%	6.00%	Foundations
Penrith BS		SB	Arrears	01768 863675	80%	80%	5.89%	Foundations
Saffron BS		SB & CB	Arrears	0333 015 2970	80%	80%	6.19%	Flexible
Suffolk BS		SB	Arrears	0330 123 0723	70%	70%	5.90%	Foundations



Understanding heat pump performance

Switching to a heat pump? **Nigel Griffiths** explains why lab-tested CoP figures don't tell the full story on efficiency and real-world savings

Heat pumps are often sold based on impressive-sounding CoP (Coefficient of Performance) figures. But what's behind these numbers, how reliable are they and do they reflect what a heat pump system will actually achieve in real-world conditions? To make sense of the data – and understand whether your install will save money compared to a boiler – you need to ditch the sales pitch. When investigating true heat pump performance, a good place to start is the difference between the three main measures: CoP, SCoP and SPF.

What is CoP?

A heat pump's coefficient of performance (CoP) is a measure of efficiency conducted in a laboratory environment. Put simply, a CoP represents the heat energy you get out of the appliance, divided by the amount of electricity required to run the pump:

CoP = Heat Output / Electricity Input

So, if you could produce three units (usually kilowatt-hours, kWh) of energy out of a heat pump for every unit of electricity input, then the CoP would be three (3/1 = 3). People selling heat pumps often quote the CoP figure – but the fact it's achieved in laboratory conditions means it isn't generally replicable.

Remember, the CoP is only a snapshot over a short period of time in standardised conditions. This is typically meant to represent a 7°C external air temperature and 35°C water output (which essentially relates to an optimal system in a well-insulated home with underfloor heating, so CoP in a retrofit is likely to be lower). Depending on the heat pump type, there may

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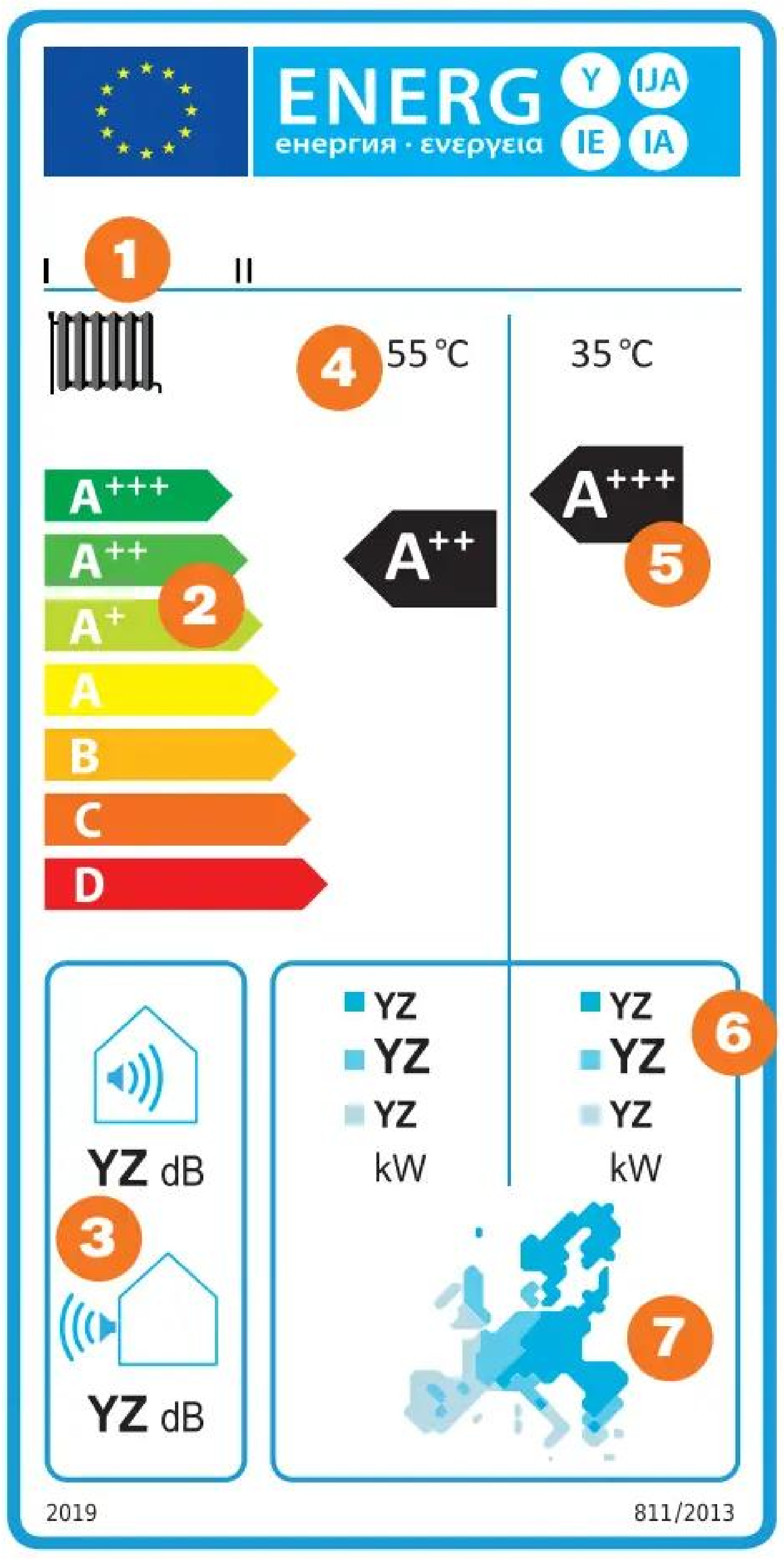
also be values for 55°C and 65°C output (which is the same range a boiler would deliver).

Real-world performance varies by season, as well as day-to-day. An air source heat pump (ASHP) will be more efficient in summer than in winter, because the temperature of the heat source (the air) is higher in the warmer months. It will still do its job in winter, of course, but there will be frosty mornings and milder days that impact efficiency.

Ultimately, the CoP used in sales brochures has quite a lot in common with the factory-measured mpg (miles per gallon) figures we're often quoted for cars. It can be useful for comparing different heat pumps, but doesn't represent the actual performance you can expect over a 12 month period – and this is what we really need to know.

WHAT A HEAT PUMP ERP LABEL LOOKS LIKE



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1. **Company name and model**
2. **Efficiency Scale**
3. **Sound level**
4. **Performance rating at 55°C and 35°C**
5. **Energy efficiency class**
6. **Nominal heat output (eg 4.0kW)**
7. **European climate zones**

SCoP – better, but still modelled

As the name suggests, Seasonal Coefficient of Performance (SCoP) measures annual performance based on varying weather conditions throughout the heating season. It is, therefore, a step closer to reality – but is still calculated rather than measured.

The formula that produces a SCoP rating uses the instantaneous CoP as a starting point, then follows an international standard to derive an annual figure. This is based on a weighted average of tested CoPs at various outdoor temperatures (intended to reflect different times of year). British Standard BS EN 14825:2022 provides a detailed methodology for calculating a heat pump's SCoP, including the required climate data, test procedures and temperature profiles for each climate zone.

SCoP is used by manufacturers to describe product performance. It's also used to calculate ErP (Energy Related Products) ratings and as part of the design standards for the Microgeneration Certification Scheme. So, it's an important metric, used in official government schemes.

There remains, however, a significant gap between the figures it generates and real-world performance. Indeed, a recent government study based on Ofgem data showed that SCoP overestimated performance by an average of 30%. So, what's the alternative?

SPF – real-world performance

The Seasonal Performance Factor (SPF) is a true measure of the performance of a heat pump system over a 12-month period, rather than a modelled estimate like CoP or SCoP. It's determined as follows:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{\text{Total measured annual heat output}}{\text{Total measured annual electricity input}}$$

Two recent major government studies (using data from actual installs) have revealed that the median SPF of air source heat pumps is 2.7 to 2.8. So, over the course of a year and depending on your setup, on average you could expect to achieve 2.7-2.8kWh of heat output for every 1kWh of electricity input. That's far lower than manufacturers' typical SCoP figures.

Here's how measured SPF compares with quoted SCoP, according to an analysis of Ofgem data for installations monitored between 2017 and 2022:

Heat pump type	Number of installs	Median SPF (measured)	Median SCOP
ASHP	**1,431**	**2.69**	**3.59**
GSHP	**286**	**3.26**	**3.93**

Assuming good design and installation, ASHPs in highly efficient new buildings – homes that have low temperature distribution (such as underfloor heating), low overall heat demand and a well-optimised control system – will achieve better results than this. But bear in mind that an equal number of installs in these studies achieved worse than the median.

Ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) achieved higher SPFs – an average of nearly 3.3. This is to be expected because the temperature of the heat source (the ground) should be higher in winter than the air.

Unfortunately, your heat pump supplier won't be able to quote you an SPF because actual performance depends on many factors – including local weather conditions, building heat loss, system design, installation quality, user behaviour and more. At the moment, the

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT HEAT PUMP PERFORMANCE?

A heat pump's actual efficiency in use depends on a range of key factors, including your property's location, nature of the building fabric, distribution system, occupancy patterns and proportion of hot water demand versus space heating.

Location influences the temperature of the heat source. Ground and air temperatures are higher the further south you go in the UK, which can boost efficiency. Local conditions such as exposure also play a part.

Building fabric determines how quickly heat is lost. Heat pumps are best at delivering heat low and slow, unlike boilers which run hot and hard. Well insulated buildings retain warmth better and suit this steady approach to maintaining indoor temperatures.

Distribution is critical. The larger the emitters, the lower the distribution temperature can be. Having a smaller gap between the source and delivery temperatures means the heat pump has less work to do. Underfloor heating is ideal but not always feasible to install in existing houses; oversized radiators are an alternative.

Patterns of occupation vary widely. If you're going to be in the house most of the time, you can run constant low-level heating, which will support optimal heat pump performance. If you're out for much of the day and tend to heat your home in bursts, the heat pump will have to work harder for shorter periods – making it less efficient.

Domestic hot water (for washing etc) represents an increasing proportion of our energy use. A heat pump has to work harder to deliver hot water at around 55°C than to supply space heating at the ideal 35°C.

best you can do is look at the government trials (In Situ Heat Pump Performance and the Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project) and try to understand whether a heat pump is likely to deliver better results than the averages quoted, given your property type and lifestyle.

Interestingly, the MCS has recently dropped SCoP in favour of standardised SPF figures in its guidelines for pre-sale performance estimation. The newly revised approach considers both the specific heat loss of the property and type of system, cross-referencing this with a lookup table of SPFs at different flow temperatures to give an indication of expected performance in-use.

What does this mean for my bills?

Now that we understand realistic efficiency, let's see how this translates into running costs. Electricity is expensive in the UK. It's costly to use it for producing direct heat, but we do this every time we boil a kettle, use the immersion heater or switch on an electric space heater. Electricity is currently about four times the price of gas per kWh, but (in the absence of a heat pump) they produce almost the same amount of heat.

For homeowners currently using direct electric heating (such as electric radiators, storage heaters or fan heaters), you'll instantly start saving money and CO2 emissions by installing a heat pump – whatever its quoted COP performance – because you'll inevitably be improving system efficiency beyond 100%.

If you're thinking of changing from a gas boiler to a heat pump, however, then – because electricity is so much more expensive – you would typically need to achieve an SPF of around 3.6 in order to match the existing system's running costs. In the right property and with good system design and installation, that is possible. But the evidence suggests that most ASHP installs don't currently achieve this level of performance, although more GSHPs may get there.

Let's crunch the running costs of a heat pump based on currently available data. For this, we'll assume an SPF of 2.8 (the better ASHP median value from the two government reports); an electricity price 3.8 times the price of gas per kWh (current Ofgem price caps); and gas boiler efficiency of 90% (typical of modern appliances). Here's what we get:

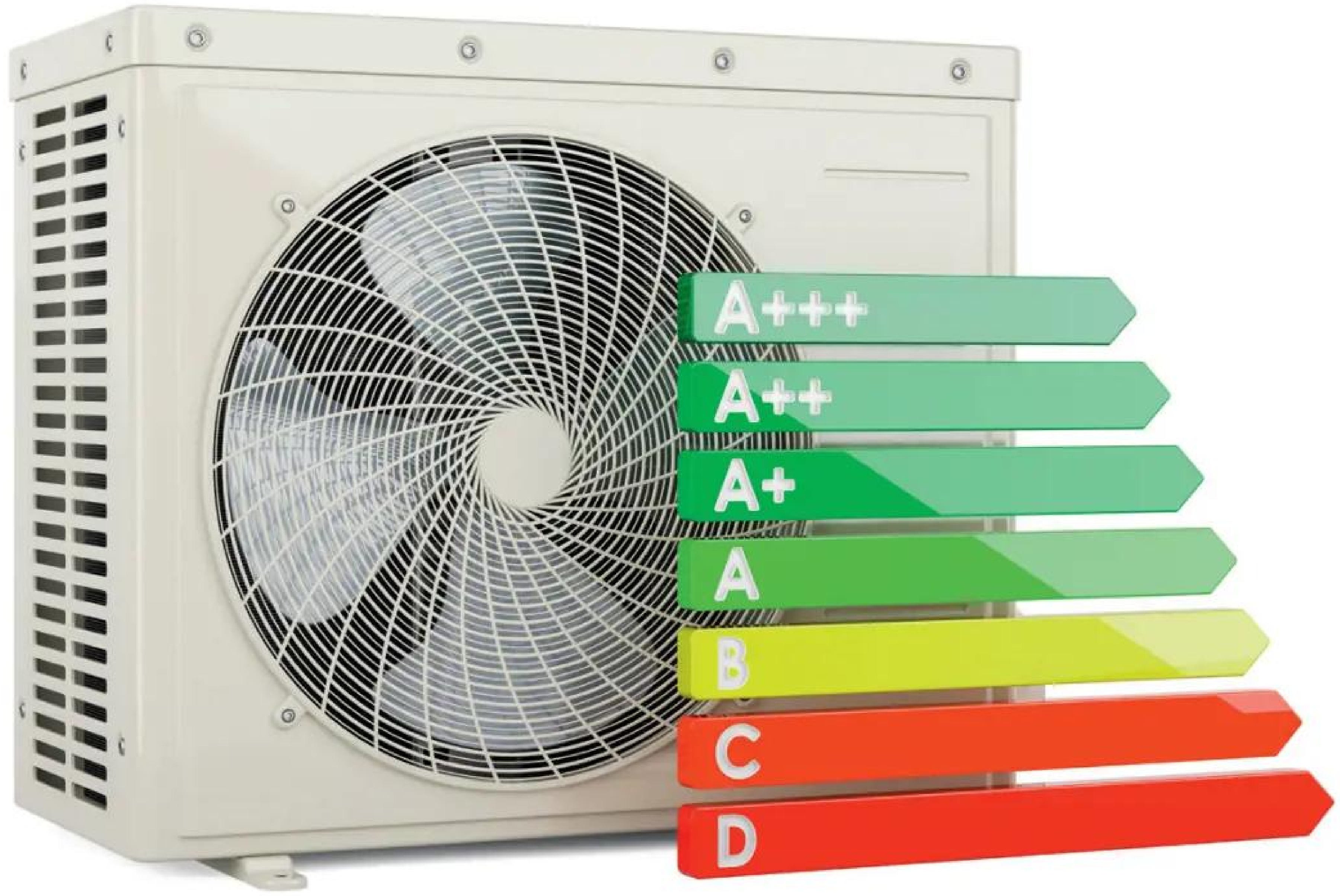
	Input per 1 kWh of heat output	Cost per 1 kWh of heat output
Gas Boiler	**1/0.9=1.1kWh**	**1.1x6.99=7.77p**
ASHP	**1/2.8=0.3571kWh**	**0.3572x27.03=9.65p**

In other words, at these performance levels, delivering the same amount of heat via a heat pump would cost 24% more than using a modern gas boiler.

Of course, running cost is not the only important issue when it comes to heat pump efficiency. The fact the UK's electricity grid has significantly decarbonised means that even a heat pump operating at a SCoP of 2.8 should save on CO2 emissions versus a gas boiler.

Peak grid demand in midwinter is a major issue, however, and the more efficiently we can use our electricity, the lower the environmental and financial cost will be as we upgrade the National Grid to adapt to the electrification of heating. The government is aware of this and, among other measures, is currently consulting on proposals to incrementally increase the minimum efficiency standards for heat pumps.

Below: Most score at least an A on the Energy Related Products (ErP) scale, with many newer models achieving A+++. The result is based largely on the appliance's SCoP



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NIGEL GRIFFITHS

Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and is the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

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PLANNING
Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent at appeal. He is the author of How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets.

FINANCE
Tom McSherry has worked in the financial services industry for 25 years, the last 10 of these at BuildStore (www.buildstore.co.uk). He has undertaken two major projects himself and speaks at self build shows throughout the year.

SUSTAINABILITY
Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and was the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Chris Batesmith is Build It's content director. He project managed Build It's real-life Self Build Education House from conception to completion. You can chat to Chris at the Build It live shows, where he is also a regular speaker. Read his collection articles online at www.self-build.co.uk/chris

PERIOD PROPERTIES
Alan Tierney is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran an historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to heritage homeowners, but is now focused on renovating yet another property: Old Barnstaple House.

DESIGN
Opinder Liddar is a director at Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk). The practice specialises in residential projects from extensions to new builds, making him the ideal person to answer all your home design questions.

VAT RECLAIMS
Kathy Tisdale runs Self Build VAT Reclaims (www.selfbuildvatreclaims.com), providing a professional VAT reclaim service which enables self builders and converters to focus on their project.

PROJECT MANGEMENT

When do I register my new build home address with the post office?

My house is scheduled for completion very soon, and while I'm hoping to move in shortly after the set date, I'm unclear on when I need to start the process of getting the address officially recognised by the post office. Do I need to apply in advance so the address is live as soon as I move in, or is it something people usually sort out once they're already living in the property? Also, how long does the registration process usually take?

The correct process for applying for a new address is to go via your local authority's Street Naming and Numbering department. Only the local authority has the legislative powers to allocate new property numbers/names (and street names).

The best time to do this is straight after you receive planning permission. Obviously, that ship has sailed in your case, so my advice would be to get your application in as soon as possible.

You'll typically need to include copies of:

- *Your site location plan, showing its context within existing streets.*
- *The layout of your site with the plot clearly numbered and your home's main access identified.*
- *Some authorities will ask for proof of your planning permission and additional drawings.*
- *You may also need geo-referenced drawings if new streets are being requested.*

You'll have to pay a fee as part of your application and, once you have submitted, there will be a consultative process. In the case of an individual new house on an existing street, that consultation is with Royal Mail and typically takes two to three weeks. You can generally expect to hear back within four to six weeks for a straightforward application. If a new street is being created, it will take a bit longer. The main point to note is that the local authority confirms the street number, but Royal Mail allocates the post code.

Once everything's verified, the new address then gets published in the Local Land and Property Gazetteer. This triggers the process of being added into the requisite official directories, such as the Royal Mail address database. So, you shouldn't actually need to contact Royal Mail directly once your home has been officially registered.

POST OFFICE

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PLANNING

Can I build on a tennis court in a green belt area?

Recent planning legislation has set ambitious targets for many local authorities in a bid to meet government housing targets, and has changed how some land is designated. Could this open the door for my plans to build a new home on my own hardstanding tennis courts, located in a green belt area?

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Most of the time, the planning system is against new buildings in the green belt and aims to keep these protected. Of course, there are some exceptions, notably a new one introduced by the government in December 2024, called the grey belt.

These are areas of green belt land that do not serve the purpose for which they were first created – which was mostly to prevent towns from overgrowth and stop them from merging into each other. So, this reform actually allows the possibility of challenging certain planning restrictions in green belt areas by finding the loopholes and ambiguities within the legislation.

In a nutshell, if you aren't infilling land between settlements, and the area is not meeting its housing targets, you could have a chance of getting permission for your new build or project.

However, because it is relatively new, we planners do not yet know how it will be applied or how easy it will be to benefit from. Unsurprisingly, councils are reluctant to grant this exemption, so we are waiting for appeal decisions to come through to see how we can expect this designation to work.

If you would like to build on your tennis courts, I'd recommend speaking to a planning consultant. Alternatively, you could make an application for permission in principle, a form of application for new housing, which allows you to check whether your proposal is fundamentally acceptable to the local authority. In this case, it would be whether you meet green belt requirements.

If this is successful, you may then be able to press on with a further application that includes the full design of the house and how you will deal with all other planning matters.

FINANCE

How can I finance my self build?

I would like to create a timber frame home on a local plot. Is there a lender that will finance the project using my existing home as surety? If so, how does this process work? Would I be able to remain in my current house until the project is finished and ready to move in to?

A self build mortgage works very differently from a traditional residential one. Instead of receiving a lump sum upfront, the funds are released in stage payments as your build progresses. This should match your project's cashflow requirements, ensuring you have money available to pay for the plot of land, foundations, superstructure and each subsequent stage through to completion

There are several ways to fund a self build project using your existing home as surety, depending on your circumstances and how much equity you have, which I will take you through here.

One option is to remortgage your current home or take a further advance with your existing lender, releasing equity to cover the cost of buying the plot or starting the build. Alternatively, you could look at a second charge mortgage, which will sit alongside your existing one and allow you to borrow against your home without having an impact on your main deal.

For shorter-term funding needs, bridging finance can be useful – for instance, to secure a plot quickly or cover initial works before a longer-term mortgage is arranged. While it is flexible, this tends to be a more expensive, and therefore a less sustainable option, so it's typically used as a temporary solution.

The most common long-term route for a timber frame project is a stage payment self build mortgage. This will release funds in instalments as your project progresses, with some products offering advance payments that provide the money upfront. Structuring a mortgage this way is particularly useful as you avoid the risk of having a funding gap in the process.

With a timber frame build, cashflow is especially important because the structure often needs to be paid for in full before it's manufactured and delivered to site. That means you must have the right funds available at the right time, not after the work is done. So, an advance mortgage ensures your timber frame can be ordered, paid for and delivered on schedule, keeping your project moving smoothly and protecting you from costly delays.

This charming new home was built using Frame Technologies' TechVantage E panel system, with 100mm of factory-fitted insulation plus an internal insulation liner, achieving excellent energy performance within a minimal wall thickness. (frametechnologies.co.uk)

ANY QUESTIONS? **Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or visit www.self-build.co.uk/question Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine**

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info@r-wall.co.uk Tel: 01288 377337

FIND YOUR DREAM BUILDING PLOT

PlotBrowser.com is a 100% free-to-use plot and property finder, packed with 1,000s of home building opportunities. Here's a taster of the fantastic self build plots, renovation properties and conversions currently for sale near you

PlotBrowser.com is the latest addition to Build It's series of powerful project tools (**www.buildit.co.uk/tools**) designed to put you on the path to self build success.

Updated daily, this is your dedicated resource for finding genuine self build land and renovation opportunities. You'll find 1,000s of plots and properties to view nationwide, and each listing features the site details, photos, guide price and sellers' contact information – including details such as whether the plot or property is being sold at auction and, if so, when.

Crucially, we've done a big part of the plot-hunting job for you: all our plots already have either outline or full planning permission in place, so you won't have to waste your time looking at duds that might never gain consent to build.

What's more, we've sourced the planning reference for you, so that you can quickly and easily identify the current planning consent on the relevant local authority's website. This will arm you with a full understanding of the site's planning history and what's been permitted, so you can gauge whether the plot can support the kind of house you'd like to create.

The following pages are a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion projects available on **PlotBrowser.com** this month.

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?

Head to PlotBrowser.com and register as a seller to list your plot for free.

PlotBrowser from **BuildIt** magazine

START YOUR PLOT SEARCH

To find more plots with planning permission across the UK, and get free notifications of new opportunities based on your personal criteria, sign up today at www.PlotBrowser.com

ENGLAND

BEDFORDSHIRE

KEYSOE

Brook End Farm

A range of farm buildings with full consent for conversion into a pair of four-bedroom semi-detached homes and a single three-bedroom property.
Guide price: Over £750,000
Planning: Bedford Borough Council 24/02215/FUL
Contact: Robinson & Hall 01234 351000 bedford@robinsonandhall.co.uk
Plot ID: 137885

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

AKELEY

Plot Adj Maple Tree Cottage

A quietly situated building plot with outline planning permission for a two- to three-bedroom home.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Aylesbury Vale District Council 22/03762/AOP
Contact: The Wilkinson Partnership 01525 382065 j.white@qualityhomes.co.uk
Plot ID: 138185

COLESHILL, AMERSHAM

Village Road

A 0.44-acre plot with consent for the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuilding, and the creation of a 1.5-storey four-bedroom home.
Guide price: £1,500,000
Planning: Chiltern District Council PL/25/1177/FA
Contact: Bovingdons 01494 677733 hello@bovingdons.com
Plot ID: 138016

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ELY

West Fen Road

A single plot of around 0.13 acres with full, detailed planning permission for a three-bedroom detached house with private driveway and garden.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: East Cambridgeshire District Council 20/00516/DISA
Contact: Hockeys 01353 880797 ely@hockeys.co.uk
Plot ID: 138105

LINTON, CAMBRIDGE

Back Road

A 0.56-acre plot with planning consent granted for a striking 797m^2 home which blends contemporary design with ecological sensitivity.
Guide price: £700,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council S/0073/20/VC
Contact: Savills 01223 347147 cambridge@savills.com
Plot ID: 138087

CHESHIRE

BOLLINGTON

Adlington Road

Building plot with consent previously granted for the demolition of the existing garages and the construction of a contemporary property, set in around six acres of private woodland.
Guide price: £235,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 21/4036M
Contact: Alan Lee 01625 447929 macclesfield@alan-lee.co.uk
Plot ID: 138129

TARPORLEY

Land for Sale

With planning permission granted for a stylish dormer bungalow, this building plot offers the potential for a comfortable home with south-facing gardens and a driveway providing off-road parking. Two plots available.
Guide price: £240,000
Planning: Cheshire West and Chester Council 24/00674/REM
Contact: Hinchliffe Holmes 01829 730021 tarporley@hinchliffeholmes.co.uk
Plot ID: 138094

WOODFORD

Church Road

Measuring just under a third of an acre, a plot has planning permission for a 354m^2 contemporary home.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council DC/092296
Contact: Mosley Jarman 01614 395658 nick@mosleyjarman.co.uk
Plot ID: 138072

CORNWALL

LISKEARD

Land for sale

A building plot with outline planning permission for a single home. The plot is situated on the edge of a charming village and backs onto open fields.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/02620
Contact: Scott Parry Associates 01752 858314 sales@scottparry.co.uk
Plot ID: 137946

ROCK

Adj. to Lowenva

A single plot with detailed planning consent in place for a striking five-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £1,200,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA19/09086
Contact: John Bray & Partners 01208 862601 sales@johnbrayestates.co.uk
Plot ID: 137985

CUMBRIA

ALSTON

Nenthall

For sale via auction. A riverside site with full planning permission granted. The plot is set in the North Pennines area of outstanding natural beauty.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Eden District Council 19/0031
Contact: Pennine Ways 01434 381808 sarah@countrycottages.net
Plot ID: 138124

HALLBANKGATE, BRAMPTON

Plot 3

A derelict detached cottage with outbuildings and approx 14 acres of

TYPES OF BUILDING PLOT

New homes can be built on a range of sites and knowing about the opportunities can help you spot land with potential. Here are the key options:

BROWNFIELD SITES

This refers to previously developed land that is or was once occupied by a permanent structure. Government policy supports the provision of new housing in such locations and, on a practical level, services are likely to be in place.

DEMOLISH & REPLACE

A type of brownfield opportunity where you could knock down a building, such as an old bungalow, and construct a new home in its place. It's often more cost-effective than a renovation as VAT can be reclaimed on a new build project.

EDGE-OF-SETTLEMENT

Depending on the maps in the relevant council's Local Plan, this kind of site may or may not fall within existing built-up area boundaries. Generally, policies allow development within this zone, but control it very strictly outside. Any undeveloped land, known as greenfield, will typically only support housing to serve the needs of agriculture, replacement dwellings and some infill.

INFILL PLOTS

Many councils define this as a small gap between an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses. Infilling is usually allowed within settlements' development boundaries, and sometimes outside of these. Gaining consent will be more difficult in zones such as conservation areas.

GARDENS

Contrary to the 'backland development' headlines of a few years ago, planners still allow schemes on garden plots, especially in places that are considered to be built-up. You may even be lucky enough to have a large space that could work as a viable site or know someone who is willing to negotiate a fair price.

SERVICED PLOTS

Land that's ready to build on, with utilities, highway access and potentially other infrastructure already in place, as well as at least outline planning consent. This route offers more certainty over early-stage costs.

CORNWALL

LOSTWITHIEL

Meanders

A south-facing garden plot with planning in principle granted for a single dwelling, set in a quiet cul-de-sac with far-reaching views down the Fowey Valley.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA25/04622
Contact: Private seller 01208 872792 cs.marwood@btinternet.com
Plot ID: 138202

land which has been divided into three separate building plots. Situated in open countryside with views of the Brampton Fells, plot 3 is the conversion of the stone built cottage and comes with four acres of land.
Guide price: £140,000
Planning: Carlisle City Council 15/0736
Contact: BPK Estate Agents 01228 888999 info@bpkestateagents.com
Plot ID: 138059

DERBYSHIRE

CHELLASTON
Snelsmoor Lane
Plot extending to approx 0.27 acres with planning permission granted for a five-bedroom, two-storey detached property of approx 307m^2.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: South Derbyshire District Council 25/00840/0UT
Contact: Boxall Brown & Jones 01332 383838 sales@boxallbrownandjones.co.uk
Plot ID: 138015

KILLAMARSH, SHEFFIELD
Woodall Road
A tucked away plot with full consent and architect drawings for a single bungalow. With the groundworks and shell already in place, planning is live.
Guide price: £575,000
Planning: North East Derbyshire District Council 22/00161/RM
Contact: Morfitt Smith 0114 232 1764 sales@morfittsmith.co.uk
Plot ID: 138079

DEVON

BRAUNTON
Down Lane
A building plot in an elevated position commanding spectacular panoramic views and planning consent for a five-bedroom home offering spacious reverse living accommodation, designed to maximise the views.
Guide price: £399,950
Planning: North Devon Council 72836
Contact: Jackson-Stops & Staff 01271 377833 northdevon@jackson-stops.co.uk
Plot ID: 137941

LOWER CHERITON
Honiton
Full planning permission is in place for the conversion of redundant traditional farm buildings into a pair of three-bedroom homes.
Guide price: £550,000
Planning: East Devon District Council 24/0433/FUL
Contact: Moveli - London 21 020 3544 5257 hello@moveli.co.uk
Plot ID: 137993

ILFRACOMBE
Lee Lane
A modern barn of around 240m^2 with views over its own grass paddock to the coast. Planning consent is approved for its conversion into a four-bedroom home with garage.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: North Devon Council 80023
Contact: Phillips Smith & Dunn 01271 327878 michael@phillipsland.com
Plot ID: 137942

DORSET

LODDEN, GILLINGHAM
Shaftesbury Road
Plot with full planning permission granted for a detached two-bedroom house with two parking spaces.
Guide price: £82,500
Planning: North Dorset District Council P/FUL/2025/04190
Contact: Morton New 01747 824547 gillingham@mortonnew.co.uk
Plot ID: 138111

OKEFORD FITZPAINE
Land for sale
Building plot with full consent granted for the construction of two detached, three-bedroom homes, each with parking for two vehicles.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: North Dorset District Council 2/2019/1163/FUL
Contact: Fox Grant 01722 782727 jeremy@foxgrant.com
Plot ID: 138061

EAST SUSSEX

BRIGHTON
Downs Valley Road
A large 420m^2 site with consent for a 93.5m^2 three-bedroom detached house with off-street parking and gardens to the front and rear.
Guide price: £140,000
Planning: Brighton and Hove City Council BH2025/00136
Contact: Visum - Leicestershire 03300 101115 info@visum.co.uk
Plot ID: 138075

HERSTMONCEUX
Windmill Hill
A-third of an acre plot of land with full planning permission for a four- to five-bedroom Sussex-style home. The plot enjoys a slightly elevated position, offering uninterrupted panoramic views across open countryside towards the South Downs.
Guide price: £425,000
Planning: Wealden District Council WD/2024/2931/F
Contact: VC Estates 0300 124 7742 alison@vcestates.co.uk
Plot ID: 138077

POLEGATE ROAD
Woodside Terrace
Substantial single building plot on the outskirts of Hailsham with detailed planning consent for the erection of a large four-bedroom family house.
Guide price: £110,000
Planning: Wealden District Council WD/2022/1812/F
Contact: Your move - Polegate 01323 482321 polegate@your-move.co.uk
Plot ID: 138066

HAMPSHIRE

CHARTER ALLEY
Land for sale
A single building plot with full planning consent granted for the construction of a four-bedroom home and double garage, totalling around 227m^2.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council 24/00166/FUL
Contact: Simmons & Sons 01256 840077 basingstoke@simmonsandsons.com
Plot ID: 138191

EAST YORKSHIRE

COTTINGHAM
Northgate
Plot with planning permission for a modern detached home of 200m^2 in a private, central village location.
Guide price: £195,000
Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council 22/03940/PLF
Contact: Staniford Grays 01482 631133 swansales@stanifords.com
Plot ID: 138080

HEDON
Jubilee Close
Plot with lapsed planning permission for a three-storey property on a site extending to around 320m^2.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council APP/E2001/A/08/2076511
Contact: Frank Hill & Son 01964 659066 auctions@frankhillandson.co.uk
Plot ID: 138070

ESSEX

LAWFORD, MANNINGTREE
Grange Road
Rural plot of approx 1.55 acres with full consent for a single-storey, two-bedroom home with cart lodge.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Tendring District Council 21/01718/FUL
Contact: Kingsleigh Residential 01206 940123 sales@kingsleighresidential.co.uk
Plot ID: 138052

LITTLE BRAXTED
Land for sale
Full planning permission is approved for a five-bedroom home, set in grounds approaching one acre.
Guide price: £800,000
Planning: Maldon District Council 24/00253/FUL
Contact: Baker Estates 01376 574599 sales@baker-estates.co.uk
Plot ID: 138093

WICKFORD
Canford Avenue
A building plot extending to 0.31 acres with detailed planning permission in place for the construction of a single dwelling.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Basildon Borough Council 24/01424/FUL
Contact: Beresfords - Land and New Homes 01245 447938 land@beresfords.co.uk
Plot ID: 138100

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BROADWAY
Snowshill
A barn with planning permission to build a five- to six-bedroom country home of circa 790m^2 with landscaped gardens. An additional 50 acres are available by separate negotiation.
Guide price: £2,250,000
Planning: Tewkesbury Borough Council 23/00702/FUL
Contact: Kingsley Evans 01242 222292 info@kingsleyevans.co.uk
Plot ID: 138157

MINSTERWORTH
Main Road
Plot with extant outline consent for a single-storey home with recent planning in principle to replace the existing consent with two properties.
Guide price: £875,000
Planning: Tewkesbury Borough

Council 19/00718/OUT & 21/01378/PIP
Contact: Powells 01600 714140 enquiries@powellsrural.co.uk
Plot ID: 138186

WOODMANCOTE, CHELTENHAM
Bushcombe Lane
Land of circa 1.4 acres with planning consent to build a contemporary three-bedroom house of 279m^2.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: Tewkesbury Borough Council 21/00630/FUL
Contact: Kingsley Evans 01242 222292 info@kingsleyevans.co.uk
Plot ID: 138159

GREATER LONDON

LEE
Senlac Road
Plot with planning permission for a two-bedroom home with one off-street parking space with EV charging.
Guide price: £385,000
Planning: North Hertfordshire District Council 23/02560/FP
Contact: Satchells 01462 892041 Baldock@satchells.co.uk
Plot ID: 136890

LONDON
Adair Close
Land with planning permission for the construction of a two-storey, two-bedroom end-of-terrace house.
Guide price: £320,000
Planning: London Borough of Croydon 19/02683/FUL
Contact: Locus Keys 07902 817931 info@locuskeys.co.uk
Plot ID: 138180

HAMPSHIRE

PLOT 3 MARTINIQUE FARM
Fordingbridge
A redundant agricultural building with planning consent for either conversion or replacement into a stunning three-bedroom barn-style home. The plot measures approx 181m^2.
Guide price: £345,000
Planning: New Forest District Council 23/11191 & 22/11012
Contact: Kings Estates 01483 941010 guildford@kingsestates.co.uk
Plot ID: 138178

MICHELMERSH, ROMSEY
Hill View Road
Full planning permission is granted for a five-bedroom detached family home set on a 0.4 acre plot.
Guide price: £495,000
Planning: Test Valley Borough Council 24/02342/FULLS
Contact: Charters Estate Agents 01794 511107 romsey@chartersestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 138139

HEREFORDSHIRE

SWAINSHILL
Plot 8 Church View
Part of a custom build site of nine oak frame homes, plot 8 measures 1,210m^2 and has outline planning consent for a barn-style house.
Guide price: £255,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Oakwrights 01432 353353 enquiries@oakwrights.co.uk
Plot ID: 137624

HERTFORDSHIRE

BEDLARS GREEN
Alpenrose
Semi-rural site of approx 0.7 acres currently comprising a bungalow. Outline planning permission is approved for four detached houses ranging from 171m^2 to 206m^2.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Uttlesford District Council UTT/25/1332/OP
Contact: Private seller 07957 405585 nick@champion-uk.com
Plot ID: 138206

SURREY

FARNHAM
Wrecclesham Hill
Planning permission has been granted for the erection of a split-level, three-bedroom detached home that appears to be 1.5 storeys from the front and 2.5 storeys from the rear. The plot is secluded and comes with off-street parking and amenity space.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Waverley Borough Council Refer to Agent
Contact: 99home 020 3500 0999 info@99home.co.uk
Plot ID: 138132

BOVINGDON, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
End Oak Water Lane
Two unique quarter-acre plots are available with planning permission for a pair of three-bedroom houses each of around 279m^2 including a garage.
Guide price: £750,000
Planning: Dacorum Council 25/00618/FUL
Contact: Private seller 07769 506063 sadie.jones@btconnect.com
Plot ID: 138181

KENT

EAST LANGDON
Land for sale
Planning permission granted for a traditional-style, four-bedroom detached house totalling 359m^2 with a detached double garage.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Dover District Council 23/00473
Contact: Marshall & Clarke 01304 852960 stmargarets@marshallandclarke.com
Plot ID: 138196

HYTHE
St Leonards Road
Plot with detailed planning consent for the erection of a detached home with parking, bike store and garden.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Folkestone and Hythe District Council 23/2036FH
Contact: Lawrence & Co 01303 266022 findahome@lawrenceandco.co.uk
Plot ID: 138173

TONBRIDGE
Chantlers Hill
Planning permission has been granted on a plot totalling approx one third of an acre. Proposed plans include a private gated driveway, extensive gardens and a large garage.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 24/02429/FULL
Contact: Bracketts 01732 350503 tonbridge@bracketts.co.uk
Plot ID: 138134

LEICESTERSHIRE

SMISBY, ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH
High Croft
Site extending to 0.94 acres with consent for the demolition of the existing bungalow and outbuildings, to be replaced with a substantial detached home of around 497m^2.
Guide price: £850,000
Planning: South Derbyshire District Council DMPA/2024/1484
Contact: Fisher German 01530 410840 ashbyagency@fishergerman.co.uk
Plot ID: 138068

LINCOLNSHIRE

IRNHAM
Swinstead Road
Single building plot of around 0.89 acres with detailed planning consent granted for a detached dwelling of around 297m^2 and a detached triple garage with an external staircase leading to a loft storage room.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: South Kesteven District Council S25/0715
Contact: Frank Modern 03330 169824 hello@frankmodern.co.uk
Plot ID: 138235

NORTH YORKSHIRE

GLASSHOUSES, HARROGATE
Harewell View
Plot with planning permission granted for a pair of three-bedroom, three-storey semi-detached houses with generous gardens to the rear and ample parking to the front.
Guide price: £285,000
Planning: Harrogate Borough Council ZC23/03583/FUL
Contact: FSS 01423 501211 info@fssproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 138037

NEWSHAM, RICHMOND
Dyson Lane
Single building plot with consent for a detached four-bedroom home. A double garage has been constructed, providing ample space for vehicles.
Guide price: £185,000
Planning: Richmondshire District Council 16/00781/FULL
Contact: GSC Grays 01833 637000 barnardcastle@gscgrays.co.uk
Plot ID: 137998

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

WANSFORD
Elton Road
Set within a gated community in an elevated position overlooking the marina and River Nene, planning permissionhas been granted for a stone residence of approx 279m^2.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Huntingdonshire District Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Moores Property Hub 01572 492185 office@mooresestateagents.com
Plot ID: 138048

OXFORDSHIRE

CHINNOR
Oakley Road
A plot of around 456m^2 with planning permission for a three-bedroom

COTTAGE RENOVATION SET IN OVER 10 ACRES

LOCATION Maenclochog, Clynderwen, Pembrokeshire

GUIDE PRICE £175,000

AREA 11.8 acres

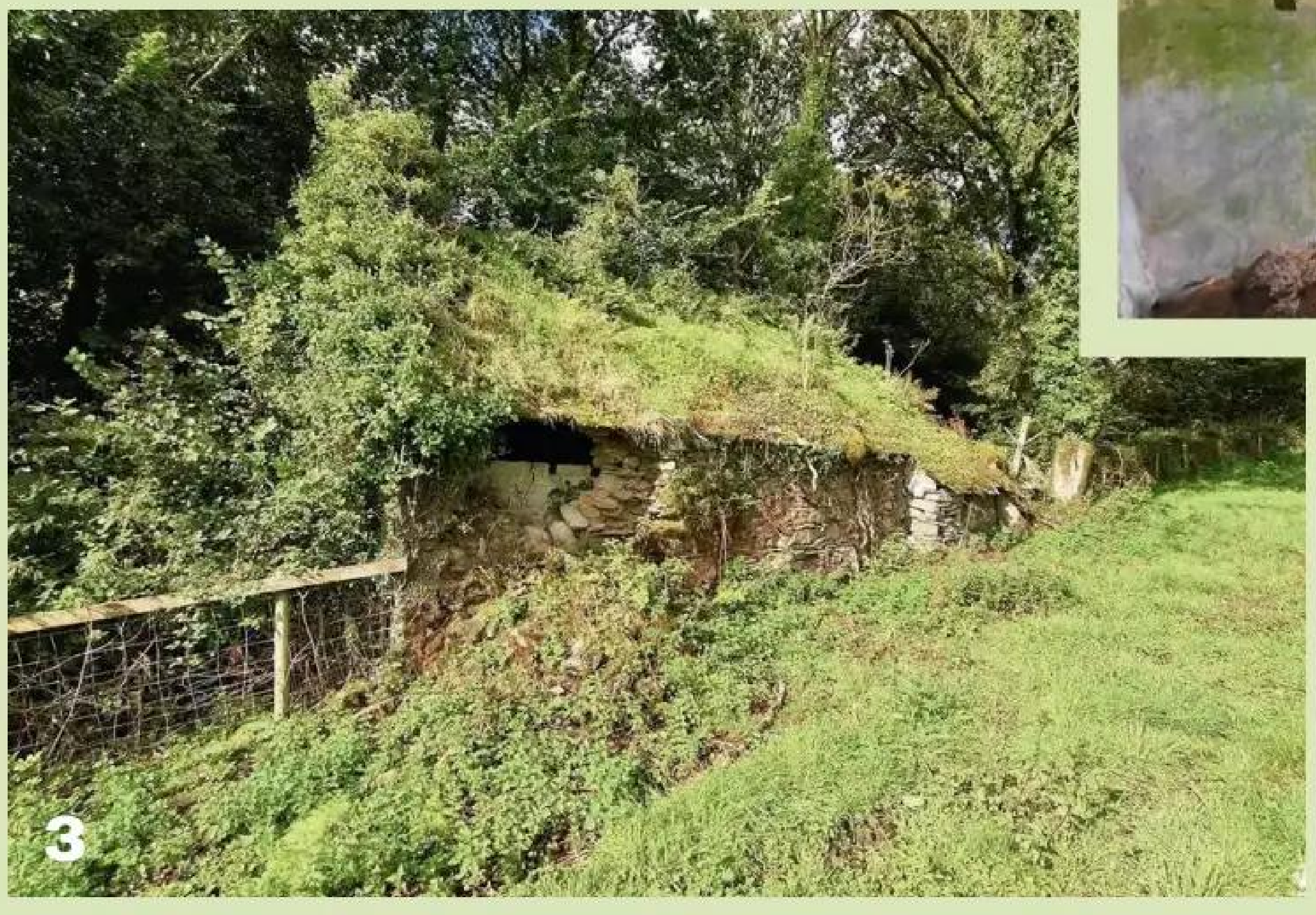
PLANNING Pembrokeshire County Council 22/0447/PA

CONTACT West Wales Properties 01834 845584 tenby@westwalesproperties.co.uk

PLOT ID: 138035

The picturesque Welsh village of Maenclochog is home to this scenic, generous site, which is located down a single-track lane and comprises both pastureland and woodland.

Currently on the 11.8-acre site, there is a former stone cottage with detailed planning permission granted for its conversion into a single home. Proposed plans allow for the development of the rundown building into a two-bedroom dwelling with a living area and spacious open plan kitchen/dining area. The plot is close to the village centre, where a thriving community and amenities can be found, including shops, a church, play park, pub, cafe and the green.



1 Set in 11.8 acres, this stunning site is made up of pastureland and woodland

2 The rundown cottage needs extensive work

3 The building plot is extremely overgrown

detached home of around 167m^2.
Guide price: £225,000
Planning: South Oxfrdshire District Council P24/S0557/FUL
Contact: Parkers 01844 353155 chinnor@parkersproperties.co.uk
Plot ID: 138146

KINGWOOD COMMON, HENLEY ON THAMES
Greyhone Leigh
A 0.74-acre plot with detailed permission for a 465m^2 five-bedroom detached house plus double garage, situated in a rural location.
Guide price: £1,500,000
Planning: South Oxfordshire District Council P24/S1830/S73
Contact: Private seller 07768 331957 dt@vidaestates.co.uk
Plot ID: 138201

SOMERSET

CRICKHAM
Crickham Lane
A building plot with lapsed outline planning permission granted for the construction of a single dwelling within a peaceful hamlet.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: Sedgemoor District Council 50/21/00023
Contact: Cooper & Tanner 01934 713296 wedmore@cooperandtanner.co.uk
Plot ID: 137983

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

SHEFFIELD
Jaunty Road
Plot with full planning permission granted to erect a three-bedroom, two-storey detached property.
Guide price: £70,000
Planning: Sheffield City Council 25/01057/FUL
Contact: Staves Estate Agent 0114 446 7582 info@stavesestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 138074

SUFFOLK

BULMER, SUDBURY
Hedingham Road, plot 1
A single building plot with planning permission granted for a single-storey, two- to four-bedroom detached dwelling of around 119m^2 including ample driveway parking and generous gardens.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Braintree District Council 25/00623/FUL
Contact: Michaels Property Consultants 01787 322799 halstead@michaelsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 138090

SURREY

GODALMING
Hambledon Road
With 3.5 acres of garden, paddocks, and less formal grounds, this plot has been granted consent for a detached family home of 348m^2 plus a double garage with storage above.
Guide price: £1,000,000
Planning: Waverley Borough Council WA/2024/01296
Contact: Clarke Gammon Wellers 01428 664800 haslemere.sales@clarkegammon.co.uk
Plot ID: 137764

WEST BYFLEET
Pyford Road
Building plot with planning consent for a single-storey property above ground plus a basement storey.
Guide price: over £300,000
Planning: Woking Borough Council PLAN/2024/0063
Contact: Curchods Custom Build 01483 479082 west-byfleet@curchods.com
Plot ID: 137890

WEST YORKSHIRE

PUDSEY
Rear of 34-38 Chapletown
Site with planning consent for a pair of semi-detached homes. The current consent is for four plots and the owner is prepared to split the title.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Leeds City Council 22/04926/FU
Contact: Manning Stainton 01132 819181 horsforth@manningstainton.co.uk
Plot ID: 138063

SILSDEN
Hawber Cote Lane
Single plot of land with full planning permission granted for the erection of a three-bedroom detached home. Externally, the home will include parking to the front and a terrace-style garden at the front and rear.
Guide price: £115,000
Planning: Bradford Metropolitan District Council 24/00040/FUL
Contact: Leightons Estate Agency 01535 666031 info@leightonsestateagency.co.uk
Plot ID: 138062

SCOTLAND

ABERDEENSHIRE

DENSIDE OF DURRIS
Muirskie Grange
A former office complex with full planning permission for conversion into a one-bedroom executive home with a carport and a garage.
Guide price: £65,000
Planning: Aberdeenshire Council APP/2021/2863
Contact: McEwan Fraser Legal 0131 524 9797 mandy.taylor@mcewanfraserlegal.co.uk
Plot ID: 138126

WILTSHIRE

CHOLDERTON
Walnut Grove
A serviced plot of around 0.6 acres with planning permission granted for a 198m^2 four-bedroom home with scope for the purchaser to tailor every aspect from layout to finishes.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Wiltshire Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Custom Build Homes 0345 223 4452 marketing@custombuildhomes.co.uk
Plot ID: 138155

FORDOUN, LAURENCEKIRK
Old Aberdeen Road
Single building plot of 0.3 acres with planning permission previously granted for residential development.
Guide price: £53,000
Planning: Aberdeenshire Council APP/2021/0599
Contact: Braveheart Auctions 0131 278 3565 sales@braveheartauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 138076

ANGUS

BY BRECHIN
Plot 1 Stannochy
Part of a development of seven houses, each with full planning consent for a detached dwelling, plot 1 has planning consent for a five-bedroom 232m^2 property.
Guide price: £140,000
Planning: Angus Council 21/00344/FULL
Contact: Private seller 07860 968007 paul@rchitects.org.uk
Plot ID: 138025

MONTROSE
Land for sale
Serviced plot with full planning permission and building warrant in place for the construction of a four-bedroom residence.
Guide price: £98,500
Planning: Aberdeenshire Council APP/2021/2199
Contact: Mcintyre Properties - Dundee 01382 780050 info@mcintyre-properties.com
Plot ID: 138109

EAST AYRSHIRE

MUIRKIRK
Miller's Road
A plot of around 216m^2 with lapsed planning consent for a five-bedroom detached house and garage.
Guide price: £34,000
Planning: East Ayrshire Council 12/0071/PP
Contact: Braveheart Auctions 0131 278 3565 sales@braveheartauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 138119

FIFE

HILLCREST, MARYBURGH
Plot 4
Situated within a small development, a generous plot with full consent for a two-storey home with an integral garage, driveway and gardens.
Guide price: £115,000
Planning: Perth and Kinross Council 23/00425/FLL
Contact: Andersons LLP 01577 862405 property@andersons-kinross.co.uk
Plot ID: 138055

NORTH AYRSHIRE

KILBIRNIE
Milton Road
Plot with full planning permission granted for the erection of two semi-detached houses. Consent includes the formation of driveways and permission for gardens.
Guide price: £45,000
Planning: North Ayrshire Council 24/00031/PP
Contact: The Property Boom 0333 900 9089 smile@thepropertyboom.com
Plot ID: 138128

RENFREWSHIRE

BARRHEAD
Park Avenue
A single building plot with full planning permission granted for the construction of a detached four-bedroom family home within an established residential area.
Guide price: over £100,000
Planning: East Renfrewshire Council 2021/0063/TP
Contact: Private seller 07826 583583 peterjstrain@virginmedia.com
Plot ID: 138117

WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

CARMARTHEN
Pibwrlwyd Lane
Single building plot measuring around 3.7 acres with outline planning consent in place for the construction of a single detached property.
Guide price: £185,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/08038
Contact: BJ Properties 07572 310493 sales@bj.properties
Plot ID: 138050

CYNWYL ELFED, CARMARTHEN
Hermon
Single building plot amounting to approx one quarter of an acre, situated on the border of the countryside with front and rear lawned garden areas.
Guide price: £115,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/08420
Contact: Gerald R Vaughan 01267 220424 sales@geraldvaughan.co.uk
Plot ID: 138084

LLANDEILO
Rhosmaen Street
Several plots available with consent for six, four- and six- bedroom detached homes with views over the Towy Valley. There is an option to buy the whole site or individual plots.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council E/35357
Contact: BJ Properties 07572 310493 sales@bj.properties
Plot ID: 138004

LLANWRDA
Harford
A secluded Hill Farm with a grade II isted stone and slate farmhouse with plans approved for a full renovation. The land extends to approx 58 acres and consists of mixed-use land split into paddocks.
Guide price: £465,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/05798
Contact: Morgan & Davies 01570 423623 lampeter@morgananddavies.co.uk
Plot ID: 138092

PEMBROKESHIRE

BONCATH
Land for sale
A building plot with consent for a pair of semi-detached dwellings on land adjacent to the former Boncath Inn.
Guide price: £90,000
Planning: Pembrokeshire County Council 24/0571/PA
Contact: J J Morris 01239 563972 cardigan@jjmorris.com
Plot ID: 137848

HAVERFORDWEST
Land for sale
A former public house with lapsed planning permission for conversion into a four-bedroom property with parking and landscaped gardens.
Guide price: £199,950
Planning: Pembrokeshire County Council 19/0672/PA
Contact: Bryce & Co 01437 620220 sales@bryceandco.co.uk
Plot ID: 138135

ASK AN EXPERT AT BUILD IT LIVE

Want more plot finding advice? Join us at Build It Live for our annual exhibitions in Kent, Malvern and Exeter

Talk to the experts
Our planning experts Julia Riddle and Martin Gaine will be on hand all weekend to answer your questions and help make that first stage of your project a little easier to digest.

Attend our seminar: How to find land and getting planning permission
Whether it's a new build, renovation or extension, creating your dream home starts with obtaining planning consent. Our plot and planning specialist guides you through the essential elements, including submitting your application, and offers invaluable advice on finding the right plot of land.

Visit the LAND ZONE brought to you by PlotBrowser.com
Check out our gallery of current available plots in the region, plus the latest serviced plot projects across the UK. Discover everything you need to know about finding the right plot for your project.

Find out more and book your tickets: **www.builditlive.co.uk**

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SHORTLISTED
Best Timber Frame Home
Build It AWARDS 2025
SHORTLISTED
Best Eco Home

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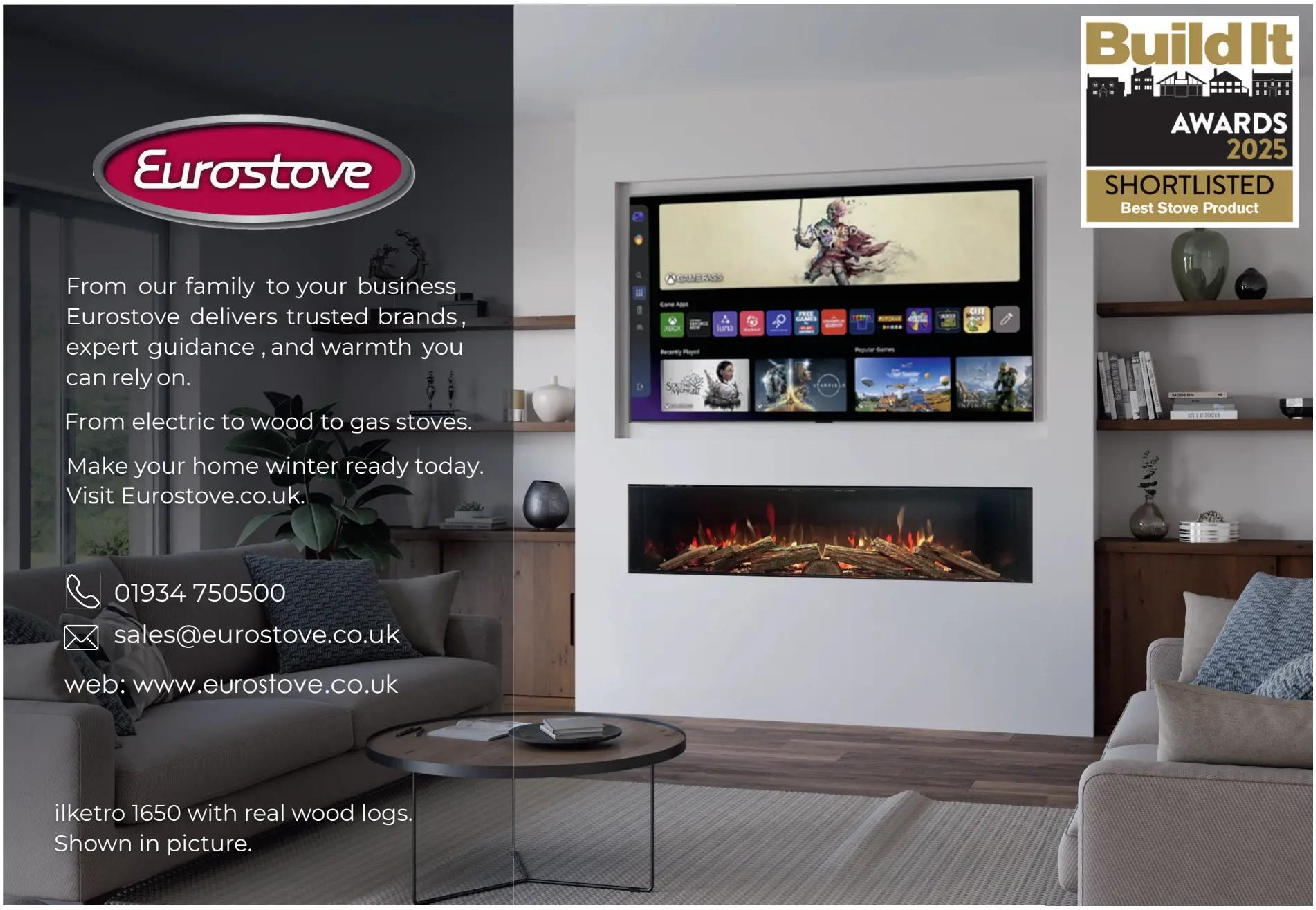
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Best Stove Product

Eurostove

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☎ 01934 750500
✉ sales@eurostove.co.uk
web: www.eurostove.co.uk

ilketro 1650 with real wood logs. Shown in picture.

In Focus

Build It Awards 2025

The Build It Awards is the UK's only independent, expert-judged scheme celebrating the very best of self build and renovation. In this edition, we're giving you a taster of some of the fantastic projects, products, services and suppliers that have made this year's incredible shortlist

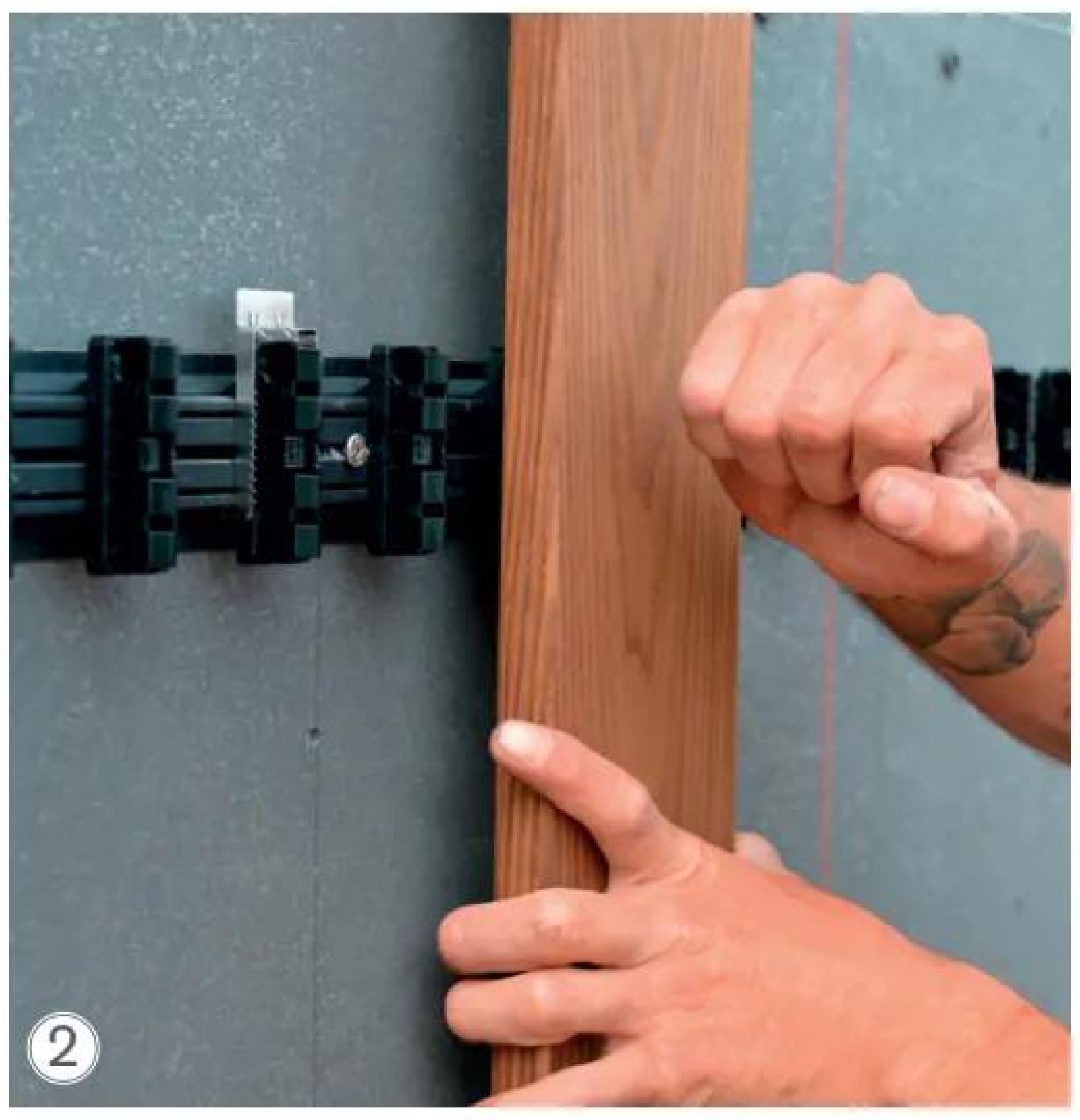
Building your own bespoke home is the only way to get the house you really want – but it comes with a host of decisions to make on the journey. Who's the best person to design my home? What structural system and materials will match my aesthetic and performance goals? Should I allocate that £10k of budget towards higher-quality glazing, sustainable tech, more smart home functionality or adding a bit more wow to the interior fit-out?

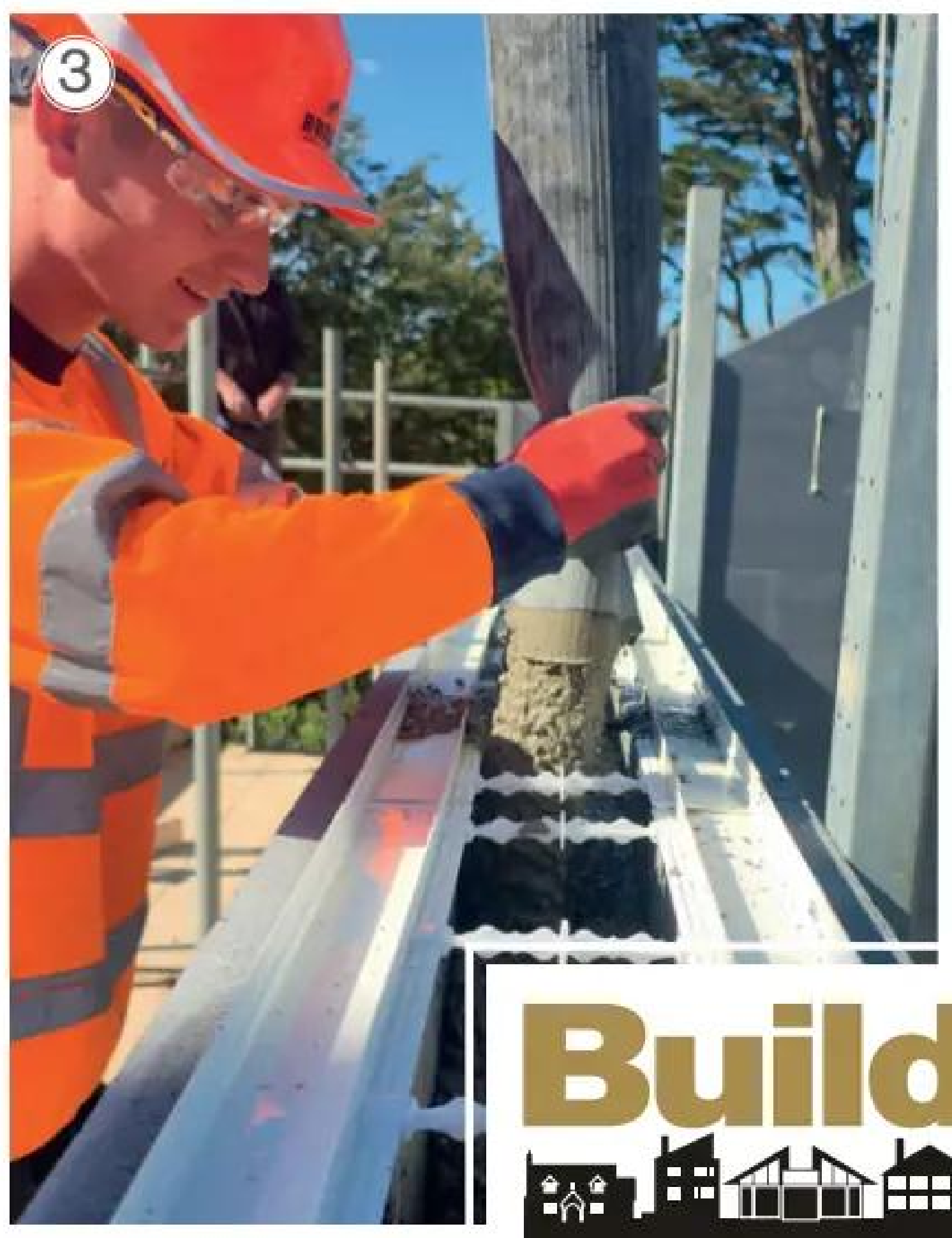
Never fear! At Build It, we've got your back when it comes to specifying the very best options to suit your project goals and budget. The pages of this magazine are a fantastic place to start, as is our online sourcebook (head to **www.self-build.co.uk/specify** to easily browse leading products and suppliers). And don't miss the in-person touch points of the Build It Live shows, where you can meet 100s of suppliers face-to-face. Our 2026 line-up includes Kent, Worcestershire and Devon – see **www.builditlive.co.uk** to plan your visit.

One hugely valuable resource is the annual **Build It Awards**. Our panel of independent experts gets together each year to scrutinise hundreds of entries across over 20 categories – shortlisting the very best products, services and solutions, so you don't have to!

From architects and designers through to building systems, roofing solutions, sliding doors, heating innovations, insulation, joinery products, eco solutions and more, all the key areas you'll need to think about on your project are covered. In fact, our panel has just decided the 2025 shortlist – and you can get a preview of some of the amazing suppliers who've made the grade – no mean feat! – over the next few pages.

Winners will be announced at the end of November. Pick up the February 2026 edition of Build It (on sale at the end of December) to learn more about the deserving winners and see the full shortlist – all of whom could make brilliant partners for your project.





1 Hebron House renovation project by Paul Archer Design, shortlisted in Best Brick Home **2** The Grad x Millworks secret-fix clip system, shortlisted in Best Cladding or Roofing System **3** The R-Wall insulating concrete formwork system, shortlisted in Best Insulation Product **4** ilektro 1250 2kW electric stove with optional real-wood log bed by Eurostove, shortlisted in Best Stove Product **5** Reclaimed oak feature staircase by Edge Bespoke, shortlisted in Best Staircase or Joinery Product

BEST TIMBER FRAME HOME & BEST TURNKEY HOME

Energy-saving self build homes

Scandia-Hus shortlisted for 2 awards – Best timber frame home and Best Turnkey home. Scandia-Hus have been building timber frame homes for over 50 years. We design and manufacture beautiful, bespoke properties. We have Scandinavian roots, but both our Self Build Show Centre and our timber frame factory are located in West Sussex. The result is the successful combination of advanced Swedish technology, with the best of British architectural style and craftsmanship. Our experienced architectural technicians, knowledgeable project managers and skilled factory team work closely together to ensure the completed home is of the highest quality. Visit our Show Centre in Sussex to see our 4 properties available to view.

Tel: **01342 838060** **Web:** **www.scandia-hus.co.uk**

BEST STOVE PRODUCT

Eurostove's iLektro electric stove

Eurostove Ltd is a proud, family-owned business based in the heart of Somerset, UK. Established in 2004, we've spent over 20 years supplying, distributing, and manufacturing high-quality wood-burning stoves, gas fires, and electric fireplaces for the UK market.

Now available with real wood as an option, the iLektro range of electric stoves from Eurostove combine stunning design with state-of-the-art technology, offering mesmerising eco-friendly LED flame effects and a clean inset design.

Ideal for self-builders, it is easy to install with no need for a flue, which means it can be fitted into any room and in any part of the home. All that is needed is a plug point, and no building regulations are required.

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ecoHaus are considered the go to bespoke glazing experts for new-build and large scale renovation and extension projects. They offer a turnkey specification, supply and install service across their broad range of high-performance products including Internorm, Velfac, Rationel and slimline Visiline.

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Heat Pump Ventilation uniquely provides heat recovery ventilation, efficient and responsive space heating, cooling and hot water all in one Passivhaus Certified system. It is suitable for well insulated and airtight homes where energy efficiency, health and running economy are paramount. Whilst providing FRESH filtered air, (important when you spend 70% of your time at home) it recovers heat that would otherwise be wasted in other forms of ventilation system. If your home's U-values and air-tightness figures are low enough and overheating is designed out, there could be no need for a separate heating or cooling system within your home, saving on build time, trades on site and the whole-life-carbon of your project!

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Welsh Oak Frame design and build award winning homes and extensions throughout the UK. Our in-house architectural designers will work with you to refine every last detail of your dream home or extension, until it delivers exactly what you want in terms of aesthetics, size and functionality – all within your budget. We can also take care of your planning application, taking the strain of the planning process away from you.

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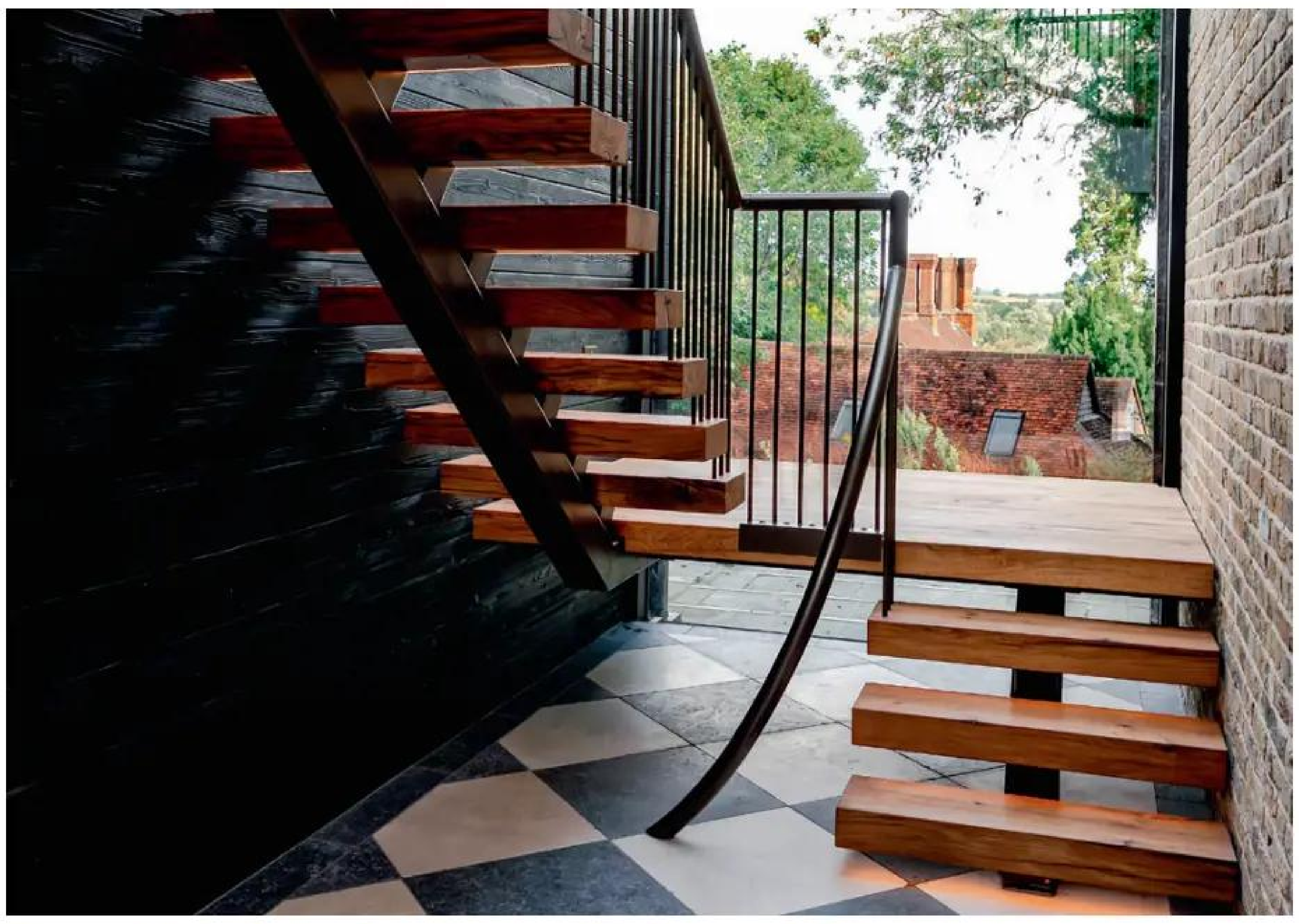

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BEST WINDOWS

NEW Timber Alternative Entrance Door

The Residence Collection has officially launched its long-awaited timber alternative open-in entrance door, the perfect addition to any home. This exciting addition to their existing Residence Collection windows offers a stunning blend of traditional aesthetics and modern material performance, crafted from PVC, the new door is a true timber alternative.

This innovation ensures an authentic timber look, making the door a true alternative to traditional wooden doors. The inclusion of a large mid-rail, a stackable deep bottom rail, drip bar and a patented decorative panel trim that disguises the gasket line all contribute to a timeless, moulded timber appearance. The door is available in a range of colours and designs, with a range of glass solutions.

For homeowners seeking a classic aesthetic but without the maintenance headaches of wood, this door offers a remarkable solution. It combines the charm of timber with the durability and efficiency of modern materials, providing the best of both worlds. You can visit our website and design your new door today!

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BEST WINDOWS

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Sternfenster are thrilled to be shortlisted for the Build It Award's Best Window category with our Elegant window, a revolutionary UK-made window for the commercial sector, combining industry leading thermal efficiency, sustainability, ultra-slim design and unmatched strength. Elegant truly sets the future standard for modern windows!

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Darlington Building Society's award-winning Self and Custom Build mortgages have realised dreams for over a decade. From self-built homes using modern methods of construction, to eco-construction projects, to funding renovations. We have dedicated experts with knowledge of the full self and custom build journey. Borrow up to 6x income with no minimum income or profession restrictions, foreign currency also accepted. Let the experts at Darlington make your dreams a reality.

Darlington Building Society

Tel: 01325 366 366 **Web:** www.darlington.co.uk

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SIPS@Clays – Creating Energy Efficient SIPs Homes

As the leading provider of SIPs self build homes and the original delivery partner of the Kingspan TEK Building System, we SIPs-design, precision engineer and expertly install SIPs projects throughout the UK. Working with SIPS@Clays couldn't be easier. From initial design and fabrication, right through to on-site installation, our in-house team works closely with you, your architect and contractor to create your perfect SIPs home. With everything in-house, including our own design studio where we push the boundaries of SIPs design, we offer technically sound, straightforward solutions that are individually tailored to each project and our streamline process ensures an end-to-end service that is hard to beat.

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Tel: 01756 799498 **Web:** www.clays.com

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Building your own home is one of life's most rewarding adventures, but it can feel daunting knowing where to start. At Fleming Homes, we make the complex more straightforward. Our experienced designers and technical experts guide you from first sketches to a fully engineered timber frame, installed to the wind and watertight stage. With decades of experience, we design homes that reflect who you are and how you want to live. Whether you're dreaming big or building smart, we'll help you realise your self-build vision with confidence, clarity, and care.

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SUNFLEX UK

Tel: 01603 424434 **Web:** www.sunflexuk.co.uk

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cbba

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Moduloft is the UK leader in volumetric modular construction, specialising in our unique modular approach to loft conversions. With over 80 years of combined senior experience delivering projects across the UK and Channel Islands - and more than 350 bespoke installations completed over the past decade, we bring a wealth of expertise and proven success to every project.

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We're delighted to be shortlisted for Best Roofing System with this stunning property transformation - our first modular loft installation on the Isle of Wight. This bespoke design raised the roof to create an entirely new floor featuring three beautifully finished bedrooms: A generous master bedroom with en-suite shower room, a single bedroom, and a bunk room, all served by a shared family bathroom.

We also designed and installed a custom double-turn staircase, seamlessly connecting the new and existing floors with matching handrails and balustrades to ensure a perfect flow throughout the home.

The result is a transformation that brings our client's vision to life — allowing them to enjoy panoramic views of the Solent from every room in their new roof space.

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Stunning Eco home

A modern Energy efficient house for private clients overlooking Start Bay. The home is heated by Air source heat pump and takes advantage of a large ground mounted solar array. The frame and roof were highly insulated in a fabric first approach with the inclusion of a MVHR ventilation system. Large overhanging balconies provided solar shading. Internally the project included a bespoke staircase, handmade kitchen, smart lighting controls and micro-cement wet areas.

Goulden & Sons

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Web: www.gouldenandsons.co.uk

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Tailored to the Discerning

Tactile interiors design spaces that people aspire to. We bring joy through beautiful schemes every time. Creative thinking and tenacious sourcing ensure great value so we then over deliver on client expectations. We offer complete designed room schemes at set fees. Ideal for developers delivering premium, multiple units safely within budget. We specialise in luxury soft furnishings and we think window coverings can be divine so leave them to us! Home-staging is also a passion and really increases saleability.

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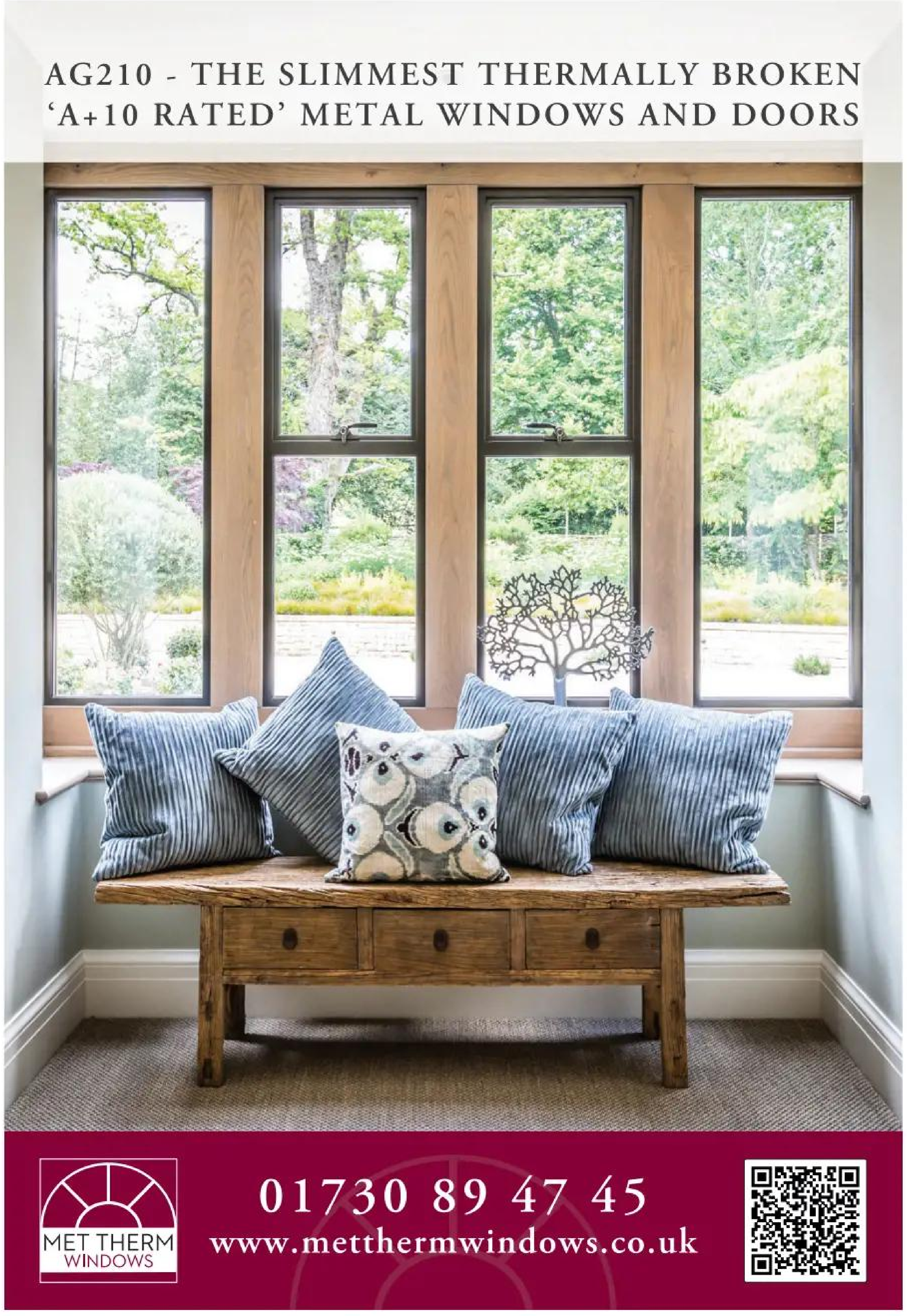

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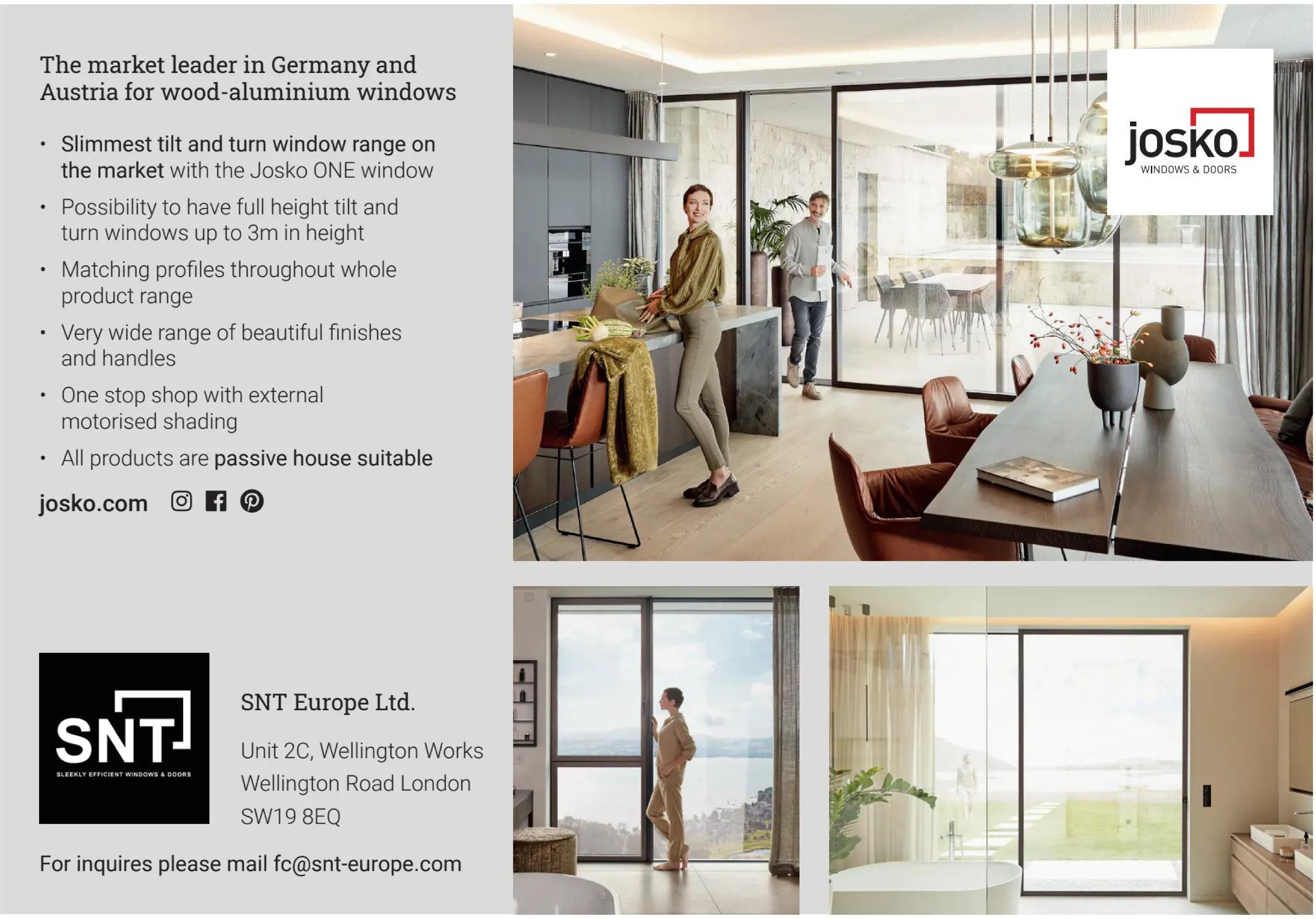

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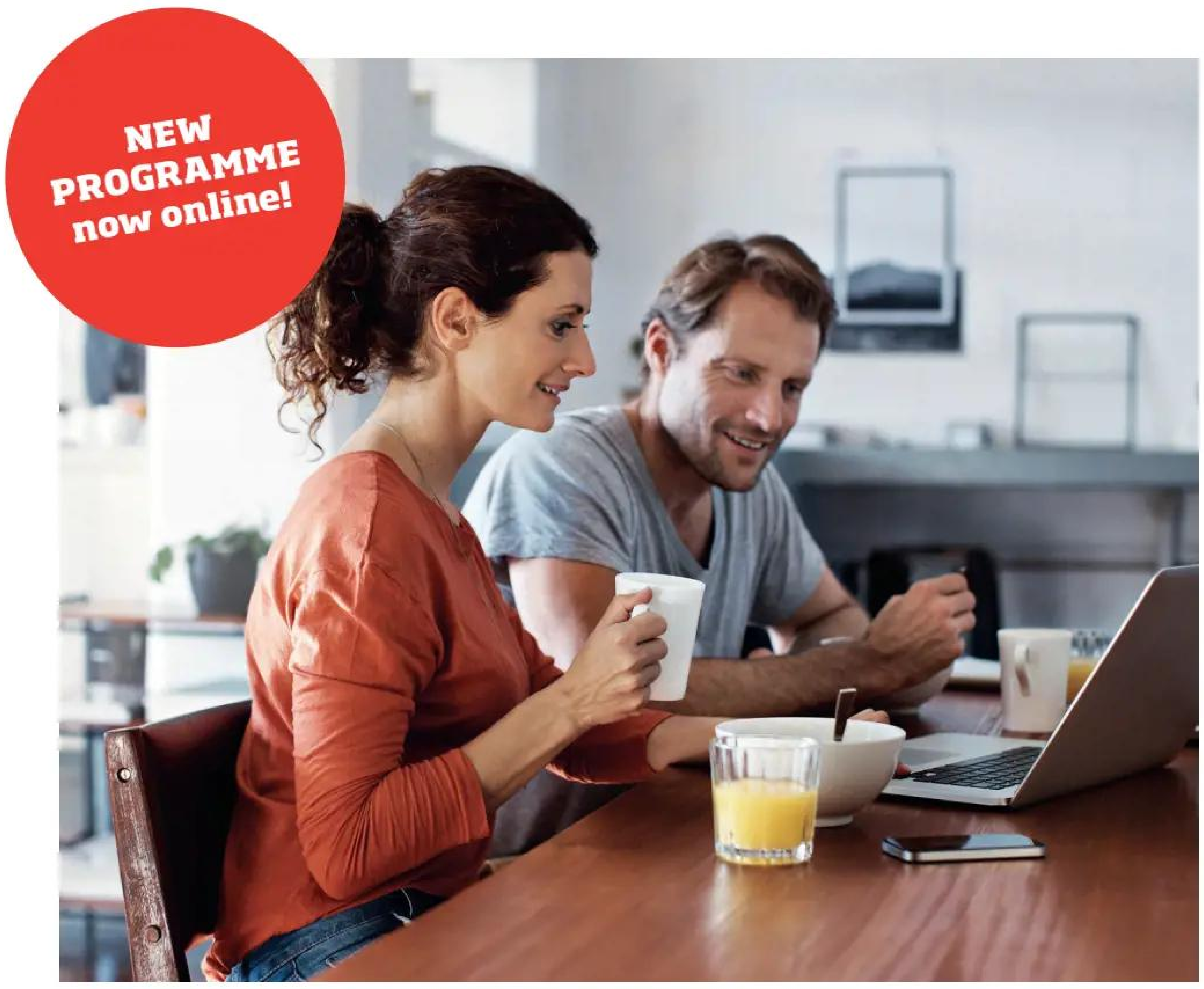

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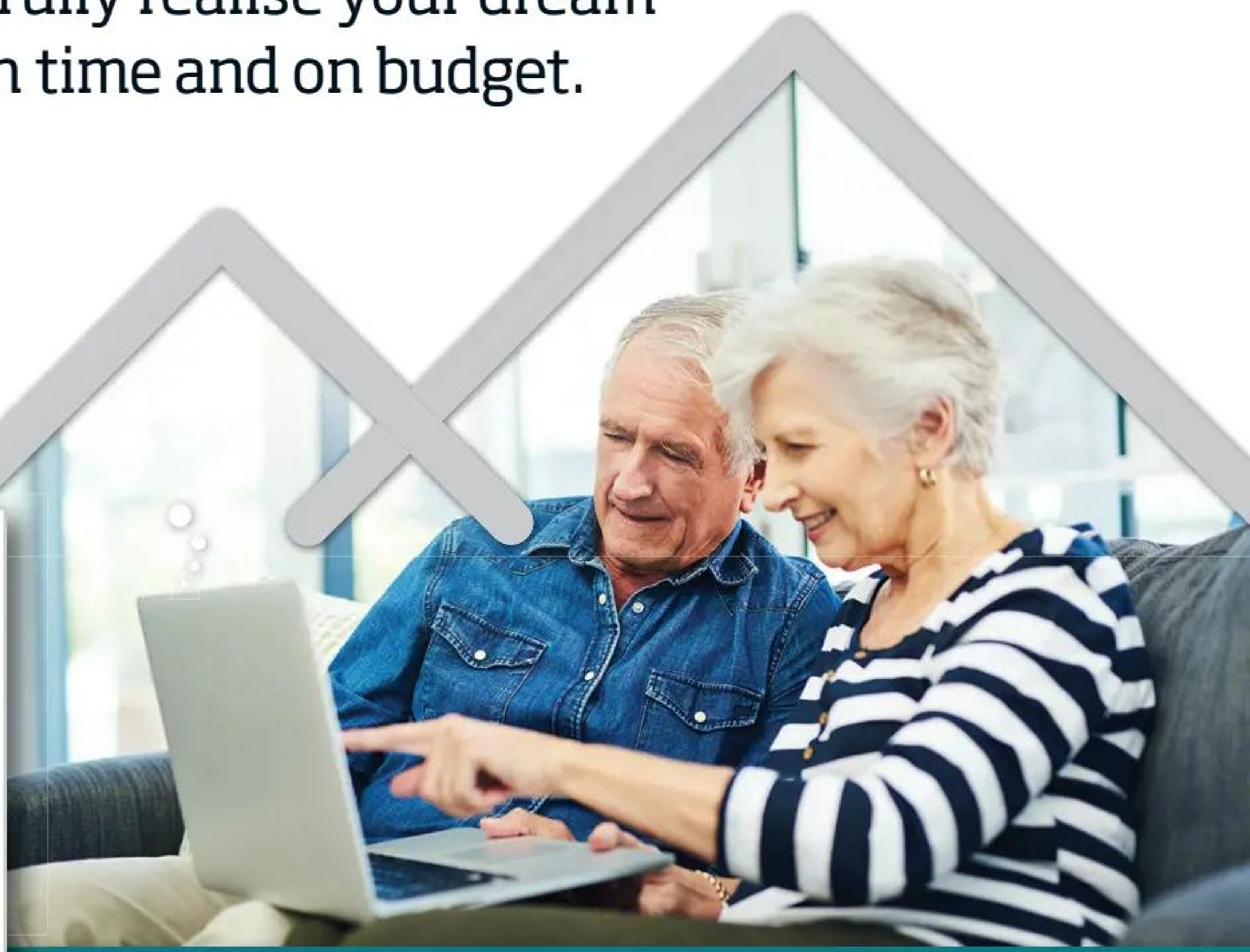

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ARCHITECT'SVIEW

Lesley Hally, founder of LA Hally Architect, discusses how you can create a stylish, functional annexe for flexible living

Designing an annexe

How can you maximise floorspace inside an annexe?

With clever and careful design, you can make a reletively small property feel ample. We tend to encourage using fitted and well-planned storage units to make use of every bit of space.

When the floorplan is tight, incorporating wet rooms with compact sanitaryware, allows for greater mobility within the area. Opting for wall-hung toilets makes the room feel larger and easier to clean. Boxing out any cisterns and using that cabinentry as a clever storage solution can help avoid cluttering the room.

Designing bedrooms and social spaces as multifunctional zones can greatly increase their usability. Including features like fold-down wall beds is especially practical for areas that are used only occasionally, such as guest bedrooms or larger living rooms.

A kitchen can also work just as well in a compact floorplan. It's best to focus on your lifestyle and planning out the area for just the essentials. Appliances don't need to be full size and if counter space is sparse, try placing an infill over the sink so that this can become part of the preparation area as and when it's needed.

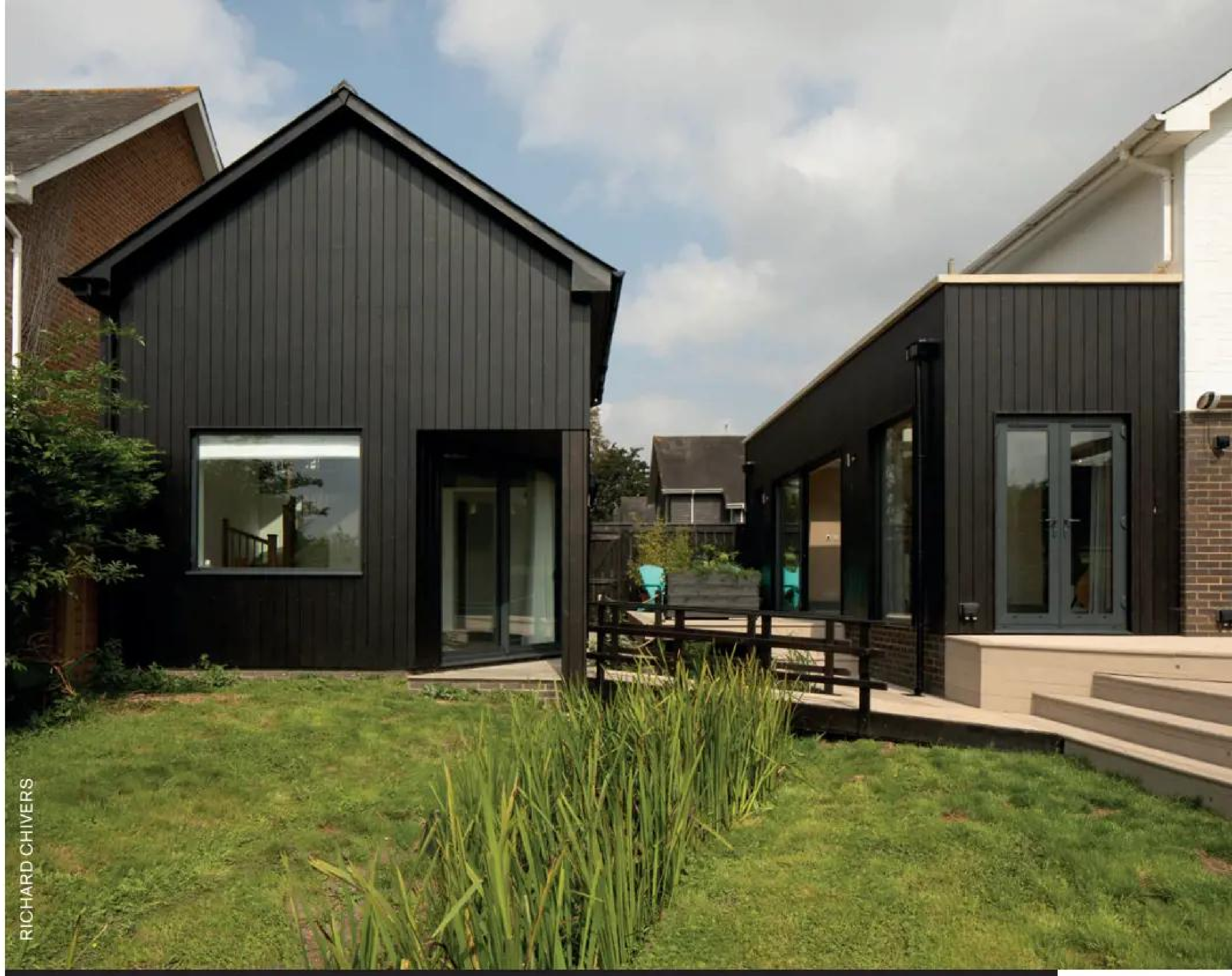
Using the same floor material throughout the annexe also helps to give the property a more open feel. You can even use that same material externally to create a chic patio area, which can elongate the floorplan. However, if you go down this route, make sure you check that your chosen tiles have the right specification for frost resistance and the material is non-slip to prevent accidents.

How can someone ensure good spatial zoning between living and bedroom areas?

In compact homes, it's important to define how each area is used, even if some serve multiple purposes. We create these distinct zones through tailored lighting layouts – such as positioning wall lights beside the bed in sleeping areas and using softer, circuit-controlled lamps in sitting rooms for evening relaxation.

Zoning can be further enhanced by joinery. For example, try fitting a storage unit that you can see through and can be used from both sides. This works particularly well in a small space as natural light can be scarce, so allowing the sunlight to travel through without interruption, makes the space feel more open.

Privacy is important in bedrooms. There are some beautifully minimal ceiling-mounted curtain tracks that can be used to divide spaces and sleek pocket doors which allow you to partition the room. We often put these sliding doors behind joinery or kitchen units so that they can slide away, out of sight completely.



RICHARD CHIVERS

This project by LA Hally Architect involved converting and extending the property's existing garage to form a light-filled, two-storey annexe. A linking path structure, which bridge over a tranquil stream running through the site, connects the new build to the main house

Is it tricky to connect services to an annexe?

Drainage solutions tend to depend on how close the new building is to the main house and where any of the existing routes are positioned. It's important to get the right fall on the drainage, which can be tricky if the manholes on site are shallow. If there is a problem with connecting your annexe to the existing services, a macerator can help to ensure waste is able to be pumped over long distances, but they can make a lot of noise in use.

When connecting electricity from the main house, you will likely need to create a channel through the garden for an armoured cabling route. This type of connection might require some remedial works, so make sure to factor this into your budget.

Distance is also a big factor when it comes to heating your new addition. Certain air source heat pumps can effectively run both the annexe and the main house, but they need to be sized suitably and be an adequate distance from the existing property.

Should the design complement the existing dwelling?

I have noticed that when it comes to listed buildings or homes located within conservation areas, a link to the existing main house seems to be preferred by the planning department.

Obviously, every building is different. Look at your home's context, scale and materiality and start your design from there.

Sometimes something very modern and contrasting works, but it needs to be justified. A link between the structures may be needed for aesethically different buildings to help make the annexe feel like it's part of the curtilage of the main dwelling.

An annexe can subtly complement the existing home by echoing key architectural elements, such as matching rooflines or window heights. You can also try using modern materials or contemporary design details to create a cohesive yet distinct addition.

How does landscape design impact an annexe?

Being able to capture a view from inside really can transform a relatively small space. Allowing for soft landscaping helps to nestle the building into its surroundings and takes away the harsh edges of a more angular structure. It also works well to have hard landscaped zones for sitting, eating and relaxing outside, which can be softened with integrated raised planters.

Lesley Hally, founder of LA Hally Architect, specialises in bespoke residential design, blending historic architecture with modern interventions to create thoughtful, detailed spaces that reflect the needs of contemporary life. For further information and to discuss your project call **01962 843500** or visit **www.lahally.com**

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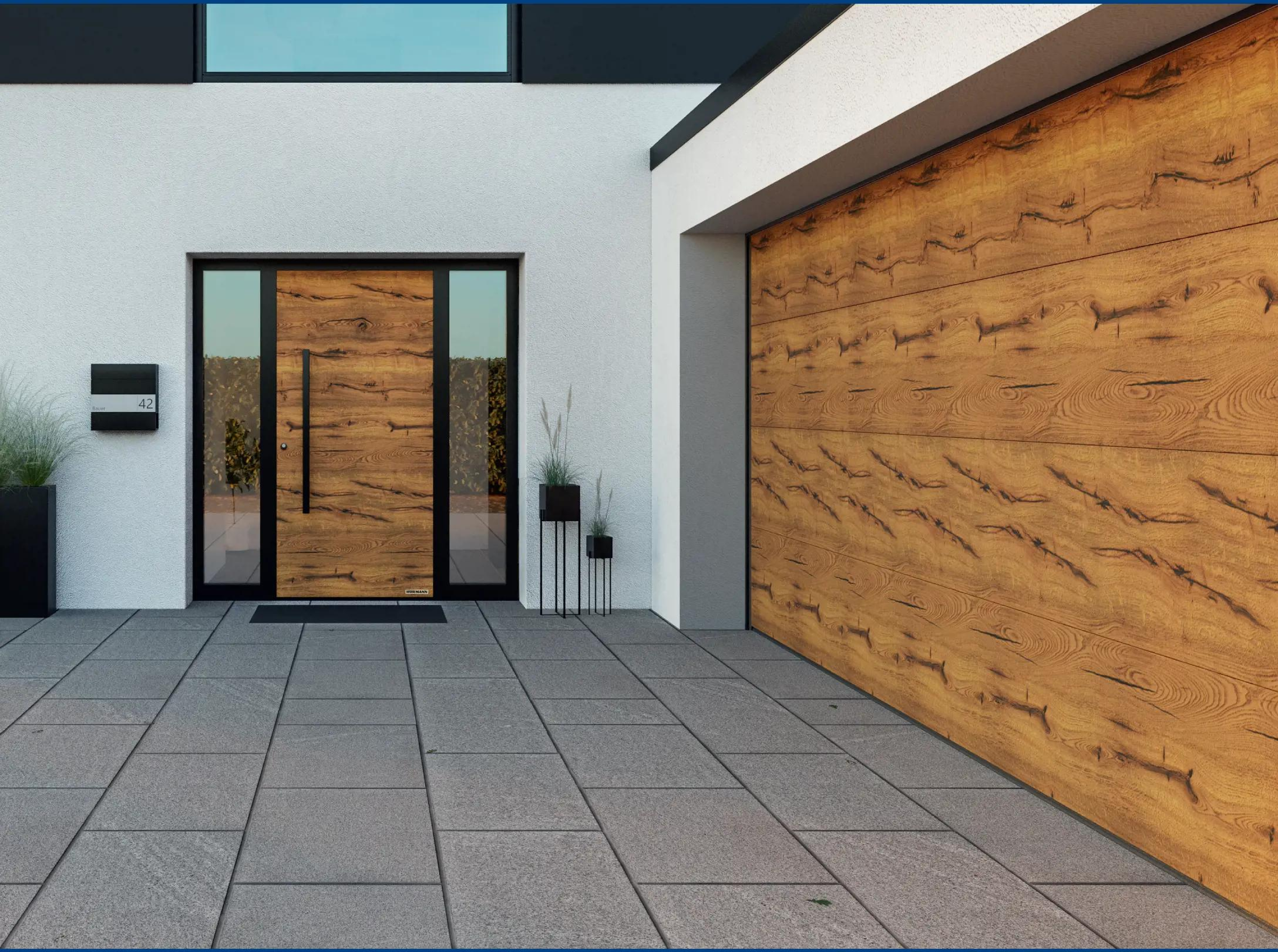

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